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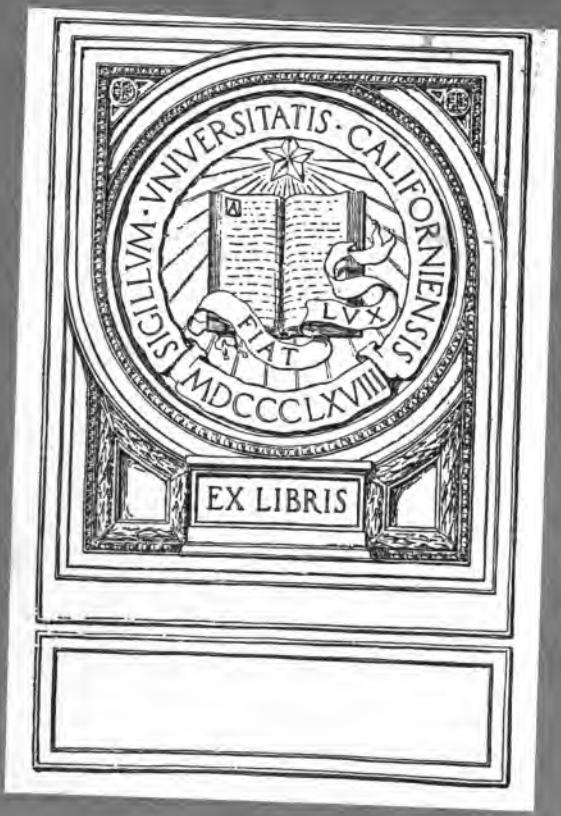
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# WONDERS OF
# BODILY STRENGTH AND SKILL.

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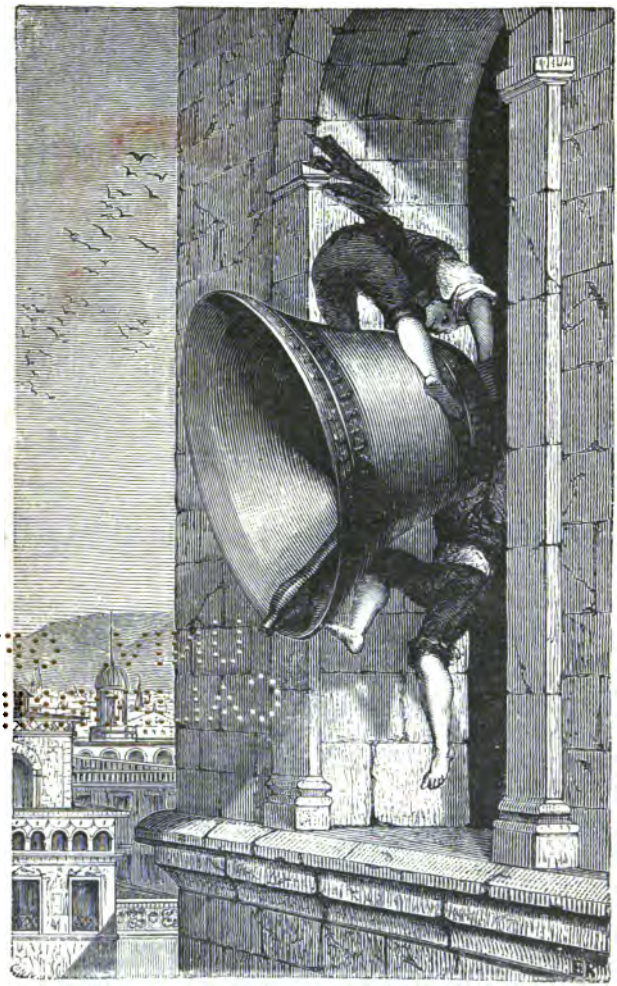

BELL RINGERS AT SEVILLE.

# WONDERS OF

# BODILY STRENGTH

# AND SKILL,

## *IN ALL AGES AND ALL COUNTRIES.*

TRANSLATED AND ENLARGED FROM THE FRENCH OF GUILLAUME DEPPING,

BY

CHARLES RUSSELL.

With Numerous Illustrations.

NEW YORK:
CHARLES SCRIBNER & CO.
1871.

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# PREFACE.

BEFORE entering on the perusal of the following pages, the reader ought to be informed what the author has, and what he has not, attempted. It was not his design to write a scientific treatise on athletic exercises, or to furnish the professional or amateur gymnast with a body of historical facts relating to the sports now in vogue. His object was to cull from every source that came within his reach anecdotes descriptive of the most remarkable exhibitions of physical strength and skill, whether in the form of individual feats or of national games, from the earliest ages down to the present time. It need scarcely be said that it did not fall within his province to authenticate these, had it been possible; and the reader—versed in the literature of modern athletics, and in all facts as to times, distances, weights, and so forth, relating to them—who shrugs his shoulders at the statement of the doings of the giants of past days, must lay the blame elsewhere. The author has simply endeavoured to make a collection of "Wonders of bodily strength and skill" from the literature of all countries and all times, and if many of them may be assigned to the

region of the improbable, or even of the incredible, he must respectfully refer doubting enquirers to the original sources. As to the arrangement of the work, it will readily be perceived that in dealing with a mass of materials which could not fail to be of a somewhat heterogeneous character, the task was a difficult one. The author has adopted that disposition which appeared to him the most natural, viz., into three books, devoted respectively to feats or games that demand chiefly physical strength; to those which are based on skill more than strength; and to those which require skill alone. It will no doubt be found in certain cases that particular performances can hardly be placed exclusively under any one of these heads; but on the whole it will probably be allowed that the arrangement is the best that could be adopted under the circumstances. It is necessary to add that in this translation numerous facts have been added to bring certain subjects up to the present time, and to adapt the work more particularly to the requirements of the English reader.

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# WONDERS OF BODILY STRENGTH AND SKILL

## BOOK I.

## BODILY STRENGTH.

### CHAPTER I.

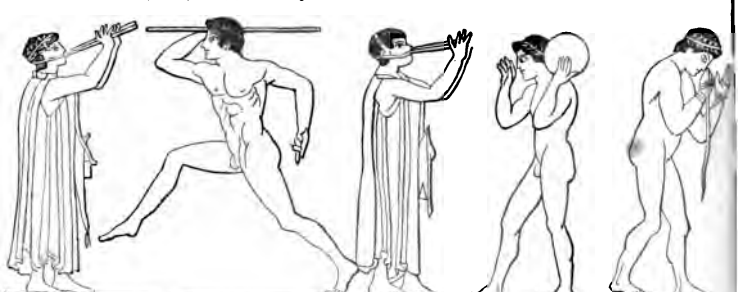
**PHYSICAL FORCE IN ANCIENT TIMES—CELEBRATED ATHLETES.**

The "Profession" among the Greeks—The Victors in Public Games—The Crowns—The Triumph—The Museum of Olympia—Milo of Croton—Polydamas of Thessalia—Theagenes—The Emperors Commodus and Maximus.

In primitive societies physical force was more highly esteemed, and was also of greater utility than it is in these days. Before men had become mixed in communities, and before those communities were powerful enough to protect all their members, it was well that each individual should be able to protect himself. Progress completed the work of nature and necessity. Everything—climate, religion, and social institutions—combined to favour the development of material force. Costume, regulated by the condition of an ever pure atmosphere, did not hide, but on the contrary, showed to advantage the outlines of

the body. Religion was nothing but the worship of external nature, and adoration was paid to physical beauty under the names of Venus and Apollo, and physical strength as embodied in the myth of Hercules. Mind came of course to be placed above matter, but at the same time matter was not entirely overcome; and so in the Bible, Samson is the type of strength, just as Hercules is in heathen mythology.

It is not then surprising that under the influence of such



Athletes practising Javelin and Quoit throwing, and Pugilism, to the sound of the Flute. (From a painted vase in the Berlin Museum.)

ideas there should have arisen among the ancients at an early period a special class of men, whose purpose in life was to develop their physical strength, and that the nations should have encouraged this tendency by establishing public games devoted to all sorts of bodily exercises. In Greece, to go no further back in ancient annals, this art was called "athletics," and those who pursued it were styled "athletes," from a word which signified *combat*. They underwent long and painful courses of training before appearing in public. They were obliged to submit to a particular regimen,

to accustom themselves to bear hunger, thirst, heat, the dust of the arena—in a word, all the discomforts to which they were to be exposed during the public games, which sometimes lasted from the morning to the evening. For this reason, Galen, the physician, showers invectives upon this profession, which he refuses to consider as one of the fine arts; "For," says he, "athletes devote themselves to increasing the bulk of their flesh and the quantity of their thick and viscous blood—not to the work of simply rendering the body more robust, but more massive, and therefore more likely to crush an adversary by mere weight. This sort of training is therefore of no use in the acquisition of that vigour which may be attained by ordinary means, and is, besides, very dangerous."

Victor in the Games accompanied by Herald.
(Bas-relief in the Clementine Museum.)

But the love of glory, which was so ardent among the Greeks, made the athletes forget the fatigues of the palæstra, and blinded them to the mishaps that threatened them when the day of contest should come. They had only one aim—to carry off the reward of the victor. The crown they won was in itself of little value, consisting of a wreath of parsley, wild olive, pine, oak, or laurel leaves, according to the locality. It is pretended that in the earliest times it was made of gold; but this opinion seems to be contradicted by the sentiments of the ancients, and of the people most

interested in the question, the athletes themselves, who considered a reward which was simple and without any intrinsic value as so much more glorious and worthy of esteem. The crown of leaves was only valuable from an idea which was associated with it, and because it gained for the athlete the applause of the people throughout the whole of Greece. Other ovations were accorded to the victor when he returned to his home bearing the crown and the palm—the emblems of his triumph. He made his solemn entrance into the town in a four-horse chariot, preceded by torch-bearers, and followed by a long procession. He did not enter by the common gate of the town, but by a breach made in the walls expressly to do him honour. By this ceremonial it was intended to indicate that a city that could count among its sons a number of valiant athletes had no need of walls to protect it against the besieger. But, was it certain that these men, in spite of all their strength, would have made good soldiers? "Though an athlete excels in wrestling," says Euripides, "is unrivalled in running, is skilled in throwing the quoit, or can soundly buffet the jaws of an adversary, in what way can such accomplishments serve his country? Can he repel the enemy with a blow of the discus, or put him to flight by going through his exercises armed with a buckler? One does not amuse himself with these trifles when he finds himself within the sweep of a swordsman's arm."

The triumphs of the athletes were sometimes very brilliant. For example, when Egenetus, in the ninety-second Olympiad, entered Agrigentum, his birthplace, he was attended by an escort of three hundred chariots, each drawn, like his own, by two white horses, and all belonging to the citizens of the town. But the honours accorded to vic-

torious athletes did not end with the pageantry of a triumph. They enjoyed numerous privileges, which were either of an honorary or of a lucrative description. They had the right of being present at all public games; their names were engraven upon marble tablets, and they were freed from the performance of civic duties. They enjoyed the right of being exempt from the charges which were levied upon the other citizens, and of being maintained to the end of their days at the expense of the national funds. Lastly, their native towns set up statues in their honour, of wood originally, but afterwards of bronze, each of which represented the athlete in the attitude in which he had gained his victory.

In later times these statues greatly increased in number, and formed an unrivalled museum at Olympia, a town of Elis, and also a theatre of public games, which were the most renowned in the whole of Greece. The museum was in the open air, the statues being scattered through the sacred grove, which in its vast circuit contained the temple of Jupiter, with a colossal figure of the god in gold and ivory by Phidias, the temple of Juno, the theatre, and a number of other buildings. The Greeks, in the enthusiasm of their nature, were so apt to render extravagant honours to the victors in the Olympic games, that the magistrates endeavoured to restrain their ardour. They watched carefully that the statues should not be on a larger scale than life, and whatever colossal statue was erected was broken by them without mercy. It was feared that the people, carried away by their enthusiasm, would set up more statues to their favourities the athletes than there were figures of the gods and demi-gods. The statues of Olympia were inscribed with the names of the greatest sculptors.

Among the most celebrated, or, at least, among those that transmit to posterity traditions of the most extraordinary feats, is that of Milo of Croton, the work of Damoas, a countryman of the great athlete. One proof that Milo did not bear away the palm without deserving it, is that he himself carried the statue which commemorated his distinction upon his shoulders, and set it up in its place. And it was not only once that he was crowned, for six times did he win the palm at the Olympic games, and on the first of these occasions he was still very young. He was equally successful in the Pythian encounters. The people of Croton, where he was born (a town on the eastern coast of Calabria), were celebrated for their physical prowess. Milo did not belie the renown of his townsmen, and loved to give proofs of his prodigious strength. It was he who was said to have ran a mile with a four-year old ox upon his shoulders, afterwards killed the animal with a blow of his fist, and ate the carcase every inch in one day. It was he also who placed himself upright upon a quoit, which had been oiled to render it more slippery, and there stood so firmly that no shock could move him. No human power could open his fingers, when, leaning his elbow upon his side, he held out his hand closed except the thumb, which was left free. Sometimes in the same hand he would hold a pomegranate, and without crushing it grasp it with sufficient strength to baffle all attempts to force it from him. A woman whom he loved alone could make him slacken his grasp, and for this reason Ælian remarked that Milo's strength was only material, and did not render him proof against human weaknesses. But, did not Hercules himself, Milo's hero and model, lie at Omphale's feet and spin yarn with that lady's distaff? Not only did Milo take Hercules for his

great example, but he imitated his personal appearance, for on one occasion he marched against an army of Sybarites at the head of his countrymen, clothed in a lion's hide, and brandishing a club.

So great was his strength that he would sometimes bind a cord round his head, and, retaining his breath, break it by the swelling and pressure of the veins. On one occasion, when he happened to be in a house with a number of the disciples of Pythagoras, the ceiling threatened to fall in; but the athlete held up the column on which the roof rested, and saved the lives of the philosophers. It is not astonishing, then, that such a vigorous athlete did not find in the public games many antagonists desirous of measuring themselves with him, and that on one occasion he was declared the victor without a combat. But, at the moment when he was about to seize the crown, which the president of the games presented to him, his foot slipped and he fell. Some spectators noting this cried out that it was not right to crown him who had not had an adversary, and especially after a fall. "I have stumbled, it is true," answered Milo, "but to lose the prize I should have been knocked down."

Nevertheless, according to Ælian, Milo found a conqueror in the person of a mountaineer named Titormus, whom he encountered on the banks of the Evenus (modern *Fidari*), a river of Ætolia. This was, without doubt, at the time when his strength was beginning to fail, but that it was so he would not allow himself to believe, and his obstinacy proved fatal to him. Having found an oak upon the road, in the bark of which some one had sunk a number of coins, Milo attempted to enlarge the opening; but the strength of his youth had declined, and he failed.

The segments closing, fastened his hands in the rift, and held the athlete prisoner; in this position he was assailed, and rent to pieces by wild beasts. At an ordinary meal Milo of Croton is said to have consumed twenty pounds of meat, as much bread, and fifteen pints of wine.

The feats of Polydamas of Thessalia, an athlete of prodigious strength and of colossal height, were not less extraordinary, and some incredible stories are told of him. It is said that, alone and without arms, he, like another Hercules, killed an enormous and enraged lion. When he held a chariot back with his one hand, the most powerful horses could not pull it from his grasp. One day he seized a bull by one of its hind feet, and the animal was able to escape only by leaving the hoof in the hands of the athlete. The King of Persia, Darius I., having heard the strange reports of his surprising strength, wished to see him, and opposed to him three of his guards, from the troop called the Immortals, who were considered the most skilled and the strongest of his army. Polydamas encountered the three, and killed them all. Like Milo, he perished through his own confidence in his muscular powers. While in a cavern with a number of companions, seeking shelter from the heat, all at once the arch opened up on several sides. The friends of Polydamas sought safety in flight; but he, without any fear, attempted with his hands to bear up the great mass of earth that fell in upon him, and was buried under it.

These athletes were so accustomed to victory that they were not in the habit of even counting their well-won wreaths. Such, for instance, was Chilo, of Patræ, in Achaia, in whose honour his countrymen raised a tomb, whose statue was carved by the celebrated Lysippus, and who flourished at Olympia in the time of Pausanias. Such

especially was Theagenes of Thasos (an island in the Ægean sea off the coast of Thrace), whose prize wreaths amounted in number—not to 10,000, as an oracle announced after his death—but to 1,200 or 1,400, according to Pausanias and Plutarch. A singular story is told of this athlete. After his death one of his rivals went every night —no doubt to gratify his hatred and show his contempt— and lashed the statue, which, accidentally falling, crushed the poor wretch to death under its mass. His son preferred a charge against the effigy, and the trial resulted in its being condemned by the Thasians to be thrown into the sea. But scarcely had this judgment been carried out than the inhabitants of Thasos were visited by a dreadful famine, and the Delphic oracle, on being consulted, gave, as usual, an answer with a double meaning, "The recall of the exiles will alone end your misfortunes." Acting on the letter and not the spirit of the suggestion, they experienced no alleviation of their distress, and the oracle, when again consulted, reminded them that they had not recalled Theagenes. But how was this to be done? Fortunately, some fishermen were able to get the statue into their nets, and brought it to land. It was conveyed with great pomp and ceremony to the spot where it formerly stood, divine honours were paid to it; and eventually Greeks and barbarians came to adore this image, which was reputed to have miraculous power, and employed it for cures for certain diseases.

The Roman emperor Caius Julius Verus Maximinus, by blood a Goth, and at one time a herdsman, deserves notice in any record of the great athletes of antiquity. During the games superintended by Septimius Severus, he entered the lists against the most formidable of his day, and knocked down six men without drawing breath. Maxi-

min, who was upwards of eight feet in height, and who received the names of Hercules, and Milo of Croton, could squeeze to powder the hardest stone with his fingers, split up young trees with his hands, break the jaw or the leg of a horse with a kick. Such was his development that his wife's bracelet served him for a ring. He adopted a vegetable dietary, but, according to one authority, would sometimes, to recompense himself for his abstinence, eat forty and even sixty pounds of meat, and drink an amphora of wine in one day. The emperor Commodus had before this assumed by decree the name of Hercules, son of Jupiter, instead of that of son of Marcus Aurelius, and appeared in public covered with a lion's hide and bearing a club in his hand. He afterwards took it into his head to abandon his chosen name, and adopt that of a famous gladiator who had just died. His pleasure then was to descend into the arena, and, laying aside the purple, which he dishonoured by his profligacy and extravagance, to fight naked before the people. His exploits in the ring are, however, not credible; and though the pedestal of his statue bore the inscription, "Commodus, conqueror of a thousand gladiators," it is to be feared that they were willing victims. Still, if the strength of the emperor was not always as great as it was made to appear, his agility, on the other hand, was incontestable, as we shall have occasion to show further on.

## CHAPTER II.

### WRESTLING AND WRESTLERS.

**The Origin of Wrestling — Hercules and Antæus, Theseus and Cercyon — Two kinds of Wrestling, the Perpendicular and Horizontal — Wrestling with the Finger Ends — Homer's Description — At what time the Athletes Fought entirely Naked — The Pancrace — Anointing and Rubbing — The Group of Wrestlers — Advantages of Wrestling among the Ancients — The Swiss Mountaineers.**

ALL the athletes to whom we have referred may be generally described as wrestlers, and their art is perhaps the most ancient of all gymnastic exercises. It is not to be supposed that those who took part in struggles of this nature were actuated by enmity or a desire for vengeance. On the contrary, for many ages wrestling was only a means of testing the strength of members of the same race, tribe, or family. Two brothers would seize each other round the body, and exert all their strength to make each other succumb, but their doing so was considered only a pastime and a preparation for the serious combats of the arena. These encounters, however, body to body, were marked by all the rudeness of primitive times, and brute force decided the victory. One athlete overthrew the other by his mere weight and mass, crushing him as they crush grain in the mill, and only relaxed his hold when his adversary owned himself vanquished. In the heroic ages every man's energies were directed to rendering his body as powerful as possible, either by continual exercise, or by a

strengthening regimen, in order to bring into play in the combats all the force of his frame and muscles. That some perverted the great physical powers which nature had bestowed upon them, and which they had developed by culture, to the purpose of tyrannising over and making profit out of their fellow-creatures is not surprising. The classic mythology teems with examples. Among the most dreaded of such monsters were Antæus and Cercyon, whom Theseus and Hercules were obliged to destroy, and to whom it is said we owe the invention of wrestling. They compelled travellers to try their strength with them, and after easy victories, killed the victims when they had thrown them to the ground. Antæus, the Lybian giant, did not, according to the myth, run any great personal danger, for he had, so to speak, insured his life, and in his encounters a fall was not a defeat, as it was for ordinary wrestlers, but rather gave him renewed strength. He was, the ancients said, the son of Terra, the earth, and each time he fell and touched his mother he received fresh powers. After Hercules had three times in vain dragged him down in his embrace, he raised him with his muscular arm, and strangled him without suffering him to touch the reviving earth. Theseus had to overcome some obstacles of the same nature in his combat with Cercyon of Attica, who used to catch wayfarers, and, after fixing them to the branches of trees, break their limbs as on a rack. The brigands of our own time, in Calabria and elsewhere, are not inexperienced in the refinements of cruelty, but

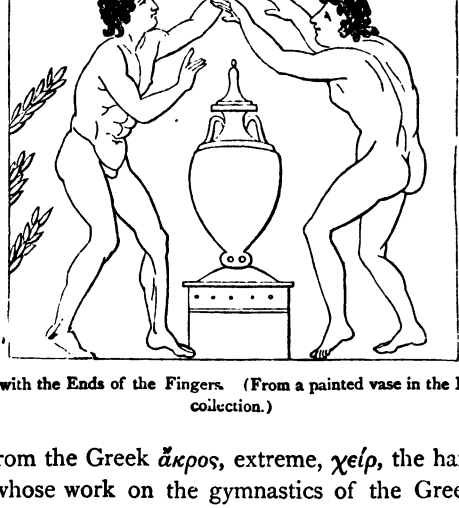
Hercules and Antæus
(From a carving in the Museum of Chiusi.)

modern governments are armed with very effectual means of putting a stop to them. Theseus, however, had not at his disposal the resources of civilisation, and it was purely out of good will, and at great personal peril, that he assumed in his own person the functions which in our days devolve on the police. If he managed to get through a wrestling bout when the odds were against him not only victoriously but with glory, it was because he had discovered the weak points of all the wrestlers who had preceded him. They possessed brute misdirected strength, which did not suffice when opposed by skill, which strips mere strength of its value; which reflects, judges, and contrives; which discovers the weak points of others, but conceals itself; which is at once a shield to defend and a spear to attack. Theseus was the first to perceive its importance in wrestling, and to introduce it in practice; and the result was that what had formerly been only an exercise without method or rules, now became an art pursued in the gymnasium.

Wrestling held a place in the Olympic games from remote times, and the hero Hercules himself carried off the prize for physical strength. When troubles began to come upon Greece the games fell into desuetude; but after they were re-established, at the instigation of the oracle at Delphos, wrestling was again recognised as an institution in the eighteenth Olympiad, and the Lacedæmonian Eurybates had the honour of being the first conqueror.

The Greeks recognised two modes of wrestling—one called the perpendicular, in which the combatants were allowed to rise after they had been overthrown; the other, in which the wrestler did not require to fear a fall, was styled the horizontal mode. It was also called the rotatory,

because in their evolutions and intertwinings the wrestlers, now uppermost now undermost, rolled upon the tan from one side of the arena to the other. Some authors assert that there was a third mode — *acrocheirismos* — which consisted in seizing the ends of the fingers of an adversary, without touching any other part of his body. The name



Contest with the Ends of the Fingers. (From a painted vase in the Hamilton collection.)

comes from the Greek ἄκρος, extreme, χείρ, the hand. But Kraus, whose work on the gymnastics of the Greeks is an authority, shows that acrocheirisim was only the prelude to the wrestle properly so called, and not an exercise of itself. Yet this preliminary struggle seems to have been of some importance, since certain athletes made it their speciality, and many excelled in it. To this class belonged Sostratus of Sicyon, as well as Leontis of Messina, who, according to Pausanias, never fatigued himself by fighting body to body,

but contented himself by squeezing and twisting the fingers of his enemy with such vigour as to oblige him to own himself defeated. Thus, as the wrestling match was often terminated with the preliminary play of hands, it is not surprising that modern critics have considered this a special exercise.

Perpendicular Wrestling. (Monument, dall' Institutio, i., 22, 8 b.)

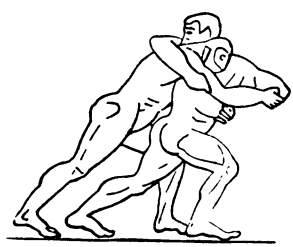
In the Homeric times neither this preliminary play nor the cunning and much-cultivated art of the horizontal wrestle was known, and upright wrestling was the only form practised. When Ajax, the son of Telamon, opposed himself to the wise Ulysses, during the games with which the funeral of Patroclus was celebrated, the perpendicular mode was the only one in use. "The heroes strip, they clasp each other by the back, and they struggle; they press each other tightly in their nervous arms. One would call them two beams which a skilled carpenter unites at the summit of a building, in order that they shall resist the strength of the wind. Their backs resound under the frequent blows given by their sinewy arms, the perspiration rolls down their limbs

upon their sides, and their shoulders rise, swelling red with blood. Ulysses cannot repel Ajax, nor Ajax overthrow Ulysses. Fearing lest this indecisive struggle would make the Greeks impatient, Ajax cries, 'Son of Laertes, lift me or let thyself be lifted by me, and let Jupiter decide the rest.' With these words he lifts Ulysses, who having now recourse to his extraordinary skill, kicks Ajax on the hamstring, and makes him bend the knee. Ajax falls upon his back, dragging with him his adversary. Ulysses now attempts to lift Ajax, but exhausts himself in vain attempts, and it is with difficulty he raises him from the earth. They fall for the second time, and roll from the one side to the other, covered with dust. They rise—they are about to recommence for the third fall, when Achilles intervenes, and drawing down their arms, 'It is enough!' he cries, 'do not waste your strength in these dangerous combats. Both are worthy of victory,' and he generously awards them equal prizes."

We observe, in the first place, from this description, that the wrestlers stripped off their clothes. Thus in the time of Homer wrestlers were not naked, at least around the loins, which they girded with a cincture, a scarf, or an apron. But, from the following, we perceive that this was a useless constraint, and was the occasion of a serious accident, of which the athlete Orsippus was the victim. While engaged in a contest his belt slipped down to his heels, and his feet were caught by it. The retention of this remnant of clothing was done away with at the beginning of the fifteenth Olympiad, at the risk of offending the modesty of the spectators. It must be remarked that men only were admitted to the Olympic games, and women prohibited by a very severe law; but such is the attraction they pos-

sessed for the sex that is rather noted for curiosity, that women frequently attempted to pass into the games, habited like men, daring the punishment which threatened them, criminals of this sort being thrown from the summit of a cliff.

Homer's wrestlers, after preparation, began the struggle, pushing and pressing against each other with all their strength; but it is to be observed that they do not strike. The blows with the fists were reserved for another kind of exercise—for pugilism, which will be considered in the next chapter. In wrestling, properly so called, there was an absolute prohibition against striking an adversary, and the rule was not peculiar to the Homeric age, but was in vogue during the centuries that followed. It applied to both kinds of wrestling—the perpendicular, which was the most ancient, and alone was in use at the time of Homer; and the horizontal, in which both adversaries rolled upon the sand.



Wrestlers. (From a painting on a jar in the collection of Prince de Canino.)

It may be objected that it is useless to attempt to regulate the attitudes of two combatants carried away by the ardour of the struggle. How is it possible to prevent two men, of whom the one is writhing in the clasp of the other, from threatening each other with the fist, and passing from the threat to the act? The wrestler, in spite of himself, became a pugilist, and the restrictions that were imposed on him went for nothing. This fact being well established, necessitated, without doubt, the invention of that other exercise which has been called the *pankration*. Unknown at the time

of Homer, the pancrace was only introduced at the public games during the thirty-third Olympiad. It was a most violent athletic exercise, which combined wrestling and pugilism, and in which it was permitted not only to push and drive an adversary with all one's force, but also to strike him with the closed fist.

Homer is so exact and conscientious a historian that

A Pancratic Engagement. (Bas-relief in the Clementine Museum.)

it is necessary to consider both what he says and what he omits to say. The personages whom he brings under our notice in the passage we have already quoted, are not said to have rubbed their bodies with oil before coming to the combat. Therefore, it is to be presumed that this practice did not up to his time form one of the usages of the ancient wrestlers. And yet it is indispensable for imparting suppleness and elasticity to the muscles. The custom, introduced at a later period, became general, and no wrestler

neglected it, either in the gymnasium or in the public games. They did not content themselves with rubbing their bodies with oil, but they soaked them in mud. How great was the astonishment of the Scythian, Anacharsis, whom Lucian the satirist introduced into the palæstra of the Athenians! He there saw beings with two legs like himself "who rolled in the mud, and wallowed there like hogs." Further on, in the uncovered part of the court, he perceived others in a ditch full of sand, for the bodies of the wrestlers, covered with an oily coat, would have slipped like those of eels, without offering any hold. The dust in which they rolled themselves mixing with the oil and the sweat formed moreover a kind of skin which protected the combatant from the effects of cold. As Lucian informs us, the wrestlers powdered and oiled each other, and when the combat was over they cleaned the dirt off each other's bodies, using for this purpose a *strigilis*, a sort of curry-comb, with which all the baths and gymnasiums were amply provided.

Greek art has transmitted to us some very curious and important works upon the subject under consideration—the wrestlers in action. The most celebrated group is that in the gallery at Florence. Who does not know it? What art student has not copied it at least once in his life? There is not a school of design, or a painter's or a sculptor's studio, but possesses a cast of it. Nevertheless, the two figures do not represent professional wrestlers. It is easy to discover this from the slimness and delicacy of their bodies; from their features, which bear no trace of fatigue or contortion; from their nervous frames, which show nothing of the abnormally developed muscles of the regular wrestler; and especially from their eyes, whose delicate contours are not cut or deformed by blows, as is always the case among

wrestlers and pancracists. With his usual sagacity, Winckelmann discovered the historic meaning of this group, that the figures are those of the children of Niobe, who were the victims of the anger of Apollo and Diana, and who at the moment when the god was preparing to strike them down with his arrows, entered on different athletic exercises, those of maturer ages engaging in horse-racing, those of tenderer years commencing to wrestle. This group, which is so remarkable for the fidelity to nature displayed in its anatomy, and which, in spite of the entwining of the limbs, presents nothing painful to the eye, but is on the contrary full of grace, harmony, and repose, was dug up from the same place as the other statues of the Niobeides. What still more enhances the value of the work in the eyes of artists is the fact that the hands, which in most ancient remains are wanting, are here entire.

All the statues of wrestlers that have come down to us have not this æsthetic value, but they serve as a means of making us comprehend the descriptions of the poets; and the historical poets, in particular, have written at great length upon a subject which provided them with striking images. In the "Iliad" we have the contest already described; in the "Æneid" that between Dares and Entellus; in the "Metamorphoses" of Ovid that between Hercules and Archelaus; in the "Pharsalia" of Lucan that between Hercules and Antæus; in the "Thebais" of Statius that between Tydeus and Agyleus; finally, in the "History of Ethiopia" of Heliodorus, that between Theagenes and the ferocious African. We can see in these descriptions how the wrestlers displayed at once energy, cunning, and skill in overcoming their adversaries, each striving to overthrow the other—the one object to be achieved in upright wrestling.

In order to succeed in doing so, the wrestler grasped his opponent by the arms, dragged him forward, drove him back, seized him by the throat, twisted his neck till he cried out, entwined his own limbs with those of his antagonist, shook him with all his might, endeavoured to lift him in the air, or hurl him upon his side. Some commenced with the preliminary sparring with the hands, of which we have spoken,

Wrestlers. (From an Etruscan tomb at Chiusi.)

while others, lowering their heads, threw themselves forward, butting like rams. This was not all. "Observe," says Lucian, "how one lifts his adversary by the legs, as they do in the gymnasiums, throws him to the earth, casts himself upon him, prevents him from rising, and drives him into the ground; squeezes his stomach with his legs, sinks his thumbs into his gullet, and soon chokes the poor wretch, who, striking his conqueror on the shoulder, begs him, with earnest entreaty, not to strangle him." The established

rules of the combat actually permitted the athlete to rip up the stomach of his adversary, and to tuck his elbow under his chin so as to deprive him totally of the power of respiration. In spite of the terrible shocks received in these conflicts, the physicians of antiquity recommend them as favourable to health, asserting that "horizontal" wrestling acted beneficially upon the loins and the lower extremities, while upright wrestling affected in a similar manner the

Another Scene. (From an Etruscan tomb at Chiusi.)

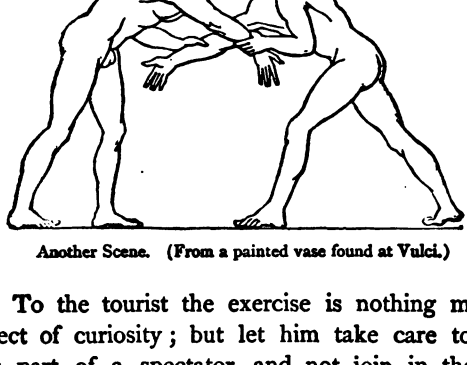
upper parts of the body. Cælius Aurelianus extolled the exercise, as tending to prevent obesity.

This much is certain, that, as a rule, wrestling as practised among the Greeks assisted in developing the muscles and the respiratory organs, facilitated the circulation of the blood, and helped to expel noxious secretions, which are discharged through the pores. So thoroughly were the Greeks convinced of the benefits of these sports, that they accorded the privilege of combating with their equals at the Olympic games even to young children. In wrestling,

a value was also assigned to the elegance and grace of the various attitudes of the body.

"Forced to appear without clothes before a vast assembly," says Solon to Anacharsis, in Lucian's dialogue, "they will take care that their attitudes are beautiful, that they may not have to blush for their nudity, and that they may render themselves in all things worthy of victory."

The wrestling of the Swiss mountaineers presents to the artist of the present day not less interesting subjects of



Another Scene. (From a painted vase found at Vulci.)

study. To the tourist the exercise is nothing more than an object of curiosity; but let him take care to act the modest part of a spectator, and not join in their rough sport, as the people of the country will certainly invite him to do. Were he the most renowned gymnast in Germany, he would infallibly come off second best in the encounter.

I would not assert that the Swiss in their wrestling call to mind the athletes of the Olympic games, but in many respects they imitate them. They sometimes begin the contest in the fashion of the ancient wrestlers, by only touching the upper parts of each other's bodies, and striking

head against head. As a rule, before coming to close quarters, they shake hands to show that they bear no malice, and then each places one hand on his opponent's belt and the other on his shoulder. This is the signal for the commencement of the struggle, the object of which is to

Another Scene. (From an antique bronze.)

throw one's adversary upon his back, and victory is only gained when this has been achieved. Soon all the muscles are strained, all the veins swollen, the eyes seem about to start from their sockets, and the panting nostrils are wide open. Each athlete endeavours to pass his leg under that of the other in order to throw him over it, and give him the fall; but this manœuvre is met by one not less ingenious,

for the other slides his left hand under the right thigh of his opponent and brings it in front of his left thigh. Taking him thus by the legs he lifts him in the air with all the strength of his wrists, and throws him upon his back, perhaps even on his head. At other times it is the blow of heel against heel that determines the fall.

The pancrace—that is to say, wrestling accompanied with fighting—does not appear to form part of these Helvetic games. Among the Greeks it was simply wrestling developed to its utmost perfection, and carried out in the fiercest and most uncompromising manner. The athletes who devoted themselves to it became the most renowned for strength, as may be readily believed, seeing that in this kind of combat all the members—the hands, feet, arms, thighs, shoulders, neck, elbows, and knees—had to play their part. The pancrace was the combination of wrestling with pugilism. We have described the former, it now remains to speak of the latter.

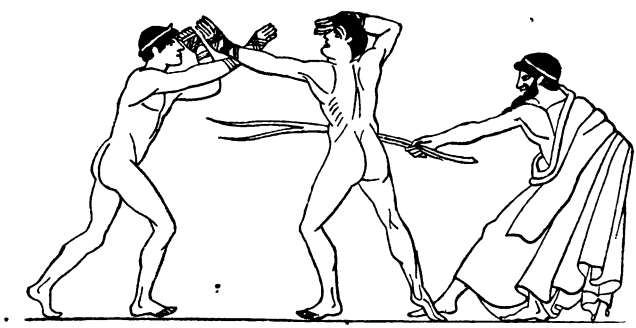
## CHAPTER III.

### PUGILISM AMONG THE ANCIENTS.

**Love of the Greeks for Pugilism, in spite of their delicacy—Whence came the best Pugilists—Diagoras and his Three Sons—The use of the Cestus—The Battle between Kreugas and Damoxene—Ferocity of an Athlete—Melancomas and his Artistic Style—Glaucus—Children and Pugilism—Epigrams in the Anthology.**

THE practice of pugilism is of the highest antiquity, for long before the invention of offensive and defensive weapons, men were accustomed to make use of that arm which was at once effective and easily used. How was it that the Greeks, the lovers of the arts—the Greeks, so delicate in their other tastes, came to admire and cherish a sport of which rude brute strength constitutes the foundation? The reason simply is that the Greeks, in spite of the refinement of their civilisation, continued to be the children and followers of nature, and made pugilism a science which they taught in common with philosophy and the fine arts. The young men were instructed and trained by skilful masters thoroughly acquainted with all the tricks and resources of this brutal art. At public amusements, at the funerals of heroes, and even at religious ceremonies, contests of this kind took place. In the "Iliad," for example, pugilistic encounters figure among a number of funeral games given in honour of Patroclus; and we read in the "Odyssey" that it was practised by the Phæacians at the court of Alcinous. The heroes of antiquity took great pride in the massive

power of their fists. Amongst those who excelled in this exercise we may mention, according to Homer, Amycus, king of the Bebrycians, who would allow strangers to travel through his kingdom only on condition that they took part in an encounter with him, and who, on these occasions, was invariably the victor, and Epeus, who was the builder of the famous wooden horse that brought about the destruction of Troy, and boasted that he had never met his equal in pugilism. It is to these two heroes that we owe the

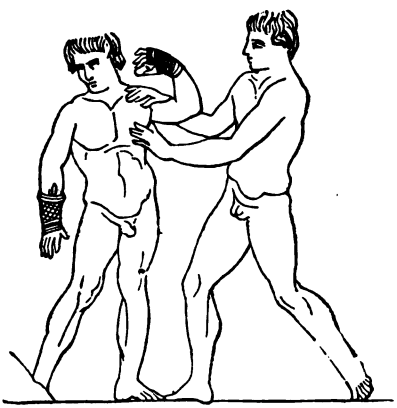


Encounter between Pugilists. (From a Greek vase.)

introduction of the "noble art of self-defence" among the athletic sports. It did not, however, at first attract much attention, for it was only admitted as a public exhibition at the celebration of the games of Elis, which took place in the twenty-third Olympiad, Onomastos, of Smyrna, being the first who publicly bore away the prize.

The most renowned pugilists came from Rhodes, Ægina, Arcadia, and Elis. Diagoras, a Rhodian, whose praises are sung by Pindar, when an old man, and after having in his time won many wreaths, led his two sons to the Olympic

games. The young men having been proclaimed the conquerors, they, taking their father upon their shoulders, bore him through the great assembly, amidst the most enthusiastic applause. "You may die now, Diagoras," cried a Lacedæmonian; "you will be remembered on earth, though you go to heaven;" meaning by this that the old man had achieved the greatest fame which a human being could

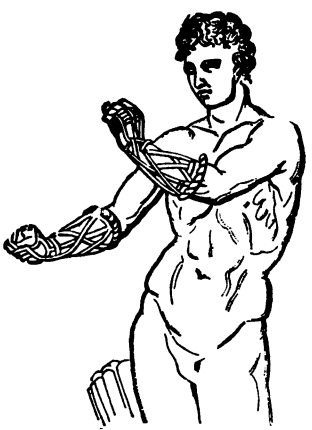


**Pugilist rubbed with oil before a Combat. (From a bronze in the Academy of St. Luc.)**

wish. And Diagoras seemed to be of the same opinion; for, unable to bear up against the excitement of the occasion, he died under the eyes of the assembled Greeks, in the arms of the two sons whose victory he had been spared to witness. He did not live to enjoy the triumph of the third of his offspring, who some time afterwards won a name even more famous than his own.

If these encounters excited among the Greeks such interest, it is difficult to see how, as certain authors assert,

the exercise was contemned by them, and practised almost exclusively by the lower classes. It is shocking to think of this passion, this enthusiasm of the Greeks for so rude a sport; but it is a fact which history, while it deplores it, is bound to record. Still, this exhibition of material strength in its coarsest and most brutal form, must have ceased to exist among the ancients, in spite of their partiality for it, had not certain athletes found means to raise it to the category of the arts. As a general rule, the earlier pugilists rushed against each other with closed fists, showering their blows, which were rendered terrific by the leather thongs which were wound around the hand and the fore-part of the arm, and so formed the gauntlet, called the cestus. The blows thus delivered were terrible. "One hears the jaws cracking under the strokes," says Homer, in describing the contest between Epeus and Euryalus; "the divine Epeus 'landing' upon his adversary, gives him a buffet on the cheek that makes him drop. He falls, his friends surrounding him, carry him away insensible, his legs hanging powerless, his head drooping on his shoulder, and dark blood flowing from his mouth." These were the results of ordinary pugilism, when the athlete directed his efforts to the disfiguration of the visage, dashed back his adversary's head to make him



Pugilist armed with the Cestus. (After a statue in the Louvre.)

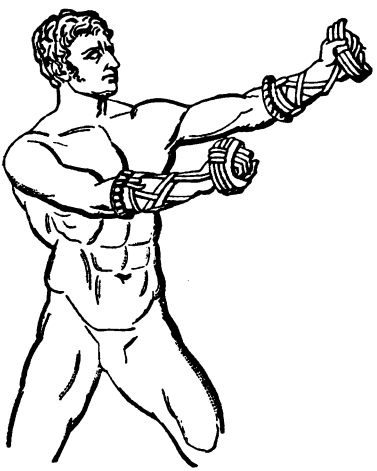
giddy, and finally delivered the *coup de grâce* by striking him with the two cesti at the same time.

Combats of this kind occasionally were of a specially ferocious character; for example, the fight between Damoxene and Kreugas, at the Nemean games. Kreugas was an athlete originally from Epidamnus (Durazzo, in Albania), Damoxene, his antagonist, was from Syracuse. As the terrible struggle in which they were engaged threatened to be pro-

**Pugilistic Encounter. (After a painted vase in the Blacas Museum.)**

longed into the night, both agreed that they should in turn cease parrying the blows which should be delivered, and that while one struck the other should remain motionless. Kreugas had the first turn, and his blow fell like that of a heavy hammer upon his opponent's head, which, however, withstood the onslaught. Damoxene, having signed to his opponent to hold his arm above his head, which was done, then drove his hand — of which the nails were long and pointed, and which was laced with leather thongs, fixed at the palm, so as to leave the extremities of the fingers free, and so very different from the *cestus*, which had not yet been invented—against the pit of Kreugas's stomach, sunk it into

the entrails, pulled them forth, and scattered them upon the arena, the poor wretch, of course, dying on the spot. The magistrates who presided at the games banished Damoxene, because it was contrary to the practice of the sport to strike a blow with the intention of causing death, and



A Pugilist. (From an ancient statue.)

the crown was awarded to the dead athlete, to whom also a statue was erected.

Certain pugilists regarded "the profession" from quite another point of view, for they made it their rule never to deliver knock-down blows; they even abstained altogether from striking, and won their battles without once hitting their adversaries. They confined their attention to one thing, to fatigue their antagonists and exhaust their patience without letting them once get at them. In this difficult

kind of fist-fencing no one excelled Melancomas, who lived under the emperor Titus, and was held by him in high esteem. His talents must have been much admired and estimated very highly, for several great orators, among others Dion Chrysostom, have condescended to praise him. Melancomas held out for whole hours, his arms extended in the face of his enemy, who sought in vain to reach him, and bruised himself in vain efforts to break through those two muscular bars, as resistant as steel. It is said that he could remain for two consecutive days in this fatiguing position, while others were utterly exhausted. By this manœuvre he deprived his adversaries of every chance, and forced them, exhausted with the long struggle, to leave him with the victory, for which they would often have preferred paying with their blood.

Melancomas left the arena without having given or received a single blow, a feat which may be regarded as the perfection of the art of self-defence. This manner of combating was much more honourable and more glorious than the other, for he gained his victory not by brute force, but by indomitable courage, perseverance, energy, and the physical strength which he developed and preserved by continual practice and habits of strict temperance. He regarded with pity those of his brethren who, after heavy smashing upon each other's faces, left the arena mutilated and disfigured, and considered this great waste of strength an actual proof of weakness. He contended that athletes, in hastening by violence to gain the victory, only showed that they were incapable of bearing up for a sufficiently long time against the inevitable fatigues of the arena.

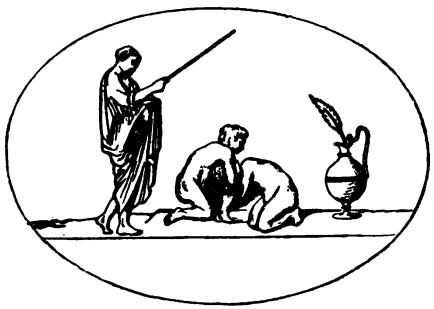
Before this great athlete succumbed to his last antagonist, others among the Greeks had adopted his tactics,

among them Glaucus, who excelled in many kinds of physical exercises. His statue, which Pausanias saw at Olympus, represented him in the favourite attitude of Melancomas, with his arms held rigid before him, to keep his adversary at a distance, and render him powerless to do mischief. It is believed, however, that Glaucus also practised the ordinary method with great swiftness and facility, his fist leaving frightful traces wherever it struck. It was he, it is said, whose father saw him using his hand as a hammer to drive in the share of his plough, which had become detached—for he had not been trained originally as an athlete, but as a simple husbandman. Guessing at his son's vigour of arm by the single proof of it which he had witnessed, the father took him to the Olympic games, where Glaucus fought with the cestus. Assailed by an adversary more adroit and more highly trained than himself, he was about to succumb, when his father cried out, "Strike, my son, as you did on the plough," and, re-animated by these words, the pugilist redoubled his efforts, and won the battle.

Children, even, practised the style for which Glaucus was distinguished. Among others is mentioned a certain Hippomaches, who in his boyish encounters, defeated in succession three opponents, and left the field without a blow or a cut. In fact the real triumph came to be to finish these rude matches safe and sound, the face unmarked, the body without a bruise. But this rarely happened, the combatants as a rule retiring from the arena dreadfully disfigured and sometimes disabled for life.

The pitiful state in which they were often left would have moved hearts of stone; but the poets, the men who as a rule grow tender frequently on very slight occasion, were not touched, especially the satiric poets, for the Greek

anthology abounds in epigrams upon this favourite subject. In reproducing them we are moved as much by the desire



Children Fighting. (From a carving in the Florence Museum.)

to excite pity for the vanquished as to record the feats of strength performed by the conquerors.

Another Scene. (From the same.)

"The conqueror at the Olympic games whom you see in that dilapidated state had yesterday a nose, a chin, nostrils,

ears, and eyelids. But in the exercise of pugilism he has lost all those embellishments, and even his inheritance. He cannot have a part of his patrimony, for he has been confronted with his portrait, which his brother produced in the court of justice, and it has been decided that he is not the same individual. There is not the slightest resemblance between the portrait and him."

A Pugilist.
(From an ancient statue.)

"Ulysses, on his return to his native country, after twenty years of absence, was recognised by his dog Argos; but thou, Stratophon, after four hours of pugilism, hast become unrecognisable, not only by the dogs, but by the whole town; and if you wish to look at yourself in the mirror you will cry out, 'I am not Stratophon,' and you will take your oath on it."

"Apollophanes, thy head has become like a sieve, or like the edges of a book eaten by worms. One would take the cuts which the cestus has made in it for the notes in a piece of Lydian or Phrygian music. Nevertheless you can fight again without fear of being further disfigured. There is no room left on your head to receive other wounds."

"Andreolus! I have fought valiantly as a pugilist in all the games of Greece. At Pisa I lost an ear, at Plateum an eye, at Delphos they carried me off insensible. But my father, Damoteles, together with my countrymen, were prepared to carry me from the arena either dead or wounded."

"Aulus, the pugilist, consecrated to the god of Pisa all the bones of his skull collected one by one. Should he return alive from the Nemean games, O valiant Jupiter! he will consecrate the vertebræ of his neck—they will be all that is left to him."

## CHAPTER IV.

### QUOIT THROWING.

**Quoit throwing in Ancient Times not a Game of Skill—Dangers of the Amusement—The Quoit in Heroic Times—Attitudes of the Player—The Statue of Myron—The Swiss Game.**

In the same rank with wrestlers and pugilists we class those who are called *discoboloi*, or quoit-players, from the game of throwing the *discus* or quoit. It seems natural at a first glance to rank the sport among exercises of skill; but it must be considered that the quoit was a very heavy mass, difficult to handle, and that it was the object of the player not to aim at a particular mark, but to heave it up and throw it as far as possible. It was a game, therefore, which required much more strength than skill.

The quoit itself consisted of a piece of flat metal, or a stone, or a lump of heavy and compact wood, which one threw in the air as far in front of him as he could. Most commonly, however, it was made of copper or iron. When held in the right hand it came some distance up the fore-arm, and it became more perfect in form in course of time. In the great days of Greece, it may be said to have been made like the ball of the eye, bulging in the middle, but growing thinner at the edges. Lucian has described it as a small round buckler, so polished and smooth that it readily slipped from the hand of the person holding it.

The throwing of the quoit—a very ancient game—was practised even in the heroic age, and the invention has been

assigned to Perseus, son of Jupiter and Danaë. In the times of Homer the quoit was a mass of rough iron called *solos*, and was used just as it came from the foundry before it had been moulded by the hammer.

Each player threw the quoit in his turn, no doubt in an order previously settled by lot, and endeavoured to surpass his opponents. The prize was won by him who threw it furthest, and this result of the competition proves that the game depended on strength rather than skill. The distance to which a strong hand could cast the iron became a measure of length acknowledged and ratified by usage, for in ancient times, "a cast of the quoit" was an expression as well understood as the range of a gun amongst us. Homer was intelligible in his time, when he says, speaking of a chariot race, "The horses of Antilochus outstepped those of Menelaus all the distance traversed by a quoit thrown by a young man who wishes to put forth his strength." The same instrument served for all the competitors, and at each throw the place where the quoit fell was marked by a stake, or an arrow, or a mark of some such kind. It will be remembered that in the "Odyssey," it is Minerva who, disguised, renders this service to Ulysses, and the goddess proved so good a marker that the quoit of her hero always found itself far in advance of those of the others. Ulysses had found this game established among the Phæacians at the court of King Alcinous, in the country to which the tempest had driven him after the sack of Troy. It was not surprising that it was familiar to him, for he had seen it played in the Greek camp before the walls of Priam's renowned city. Especially at the time when Achilles, refusing to act with his countrymen, kept within his tent, his Myrmidons amused themselves by playing with quoits

on the sea-shore. In Sparta the game was specially cultivated —no doubt, because it was an excellent training for the art of war, strengthening the arms of the young warriors for wielding freely the sword or javelin. The Romans also, under the emperors, practised the art, which the ancients seem to have held in higher esteem than the moderns do.

In playing at quoits the athlete placed himself in a space called *balbis*. He advanced his right leg, slightly bending the knee, with all the weight of the body resting on the right foot. When he was ready to launch the heavy mass, he bent his body, his left hand took a point of support, while his right extended holding his quoit, and raised behind him to the level of his shoulder, remained a moment in this position, then described half a circle in the air, and the athlete, collecting all his strength, made his throw, leaping forward at the same time, as if to increase the force of projection.

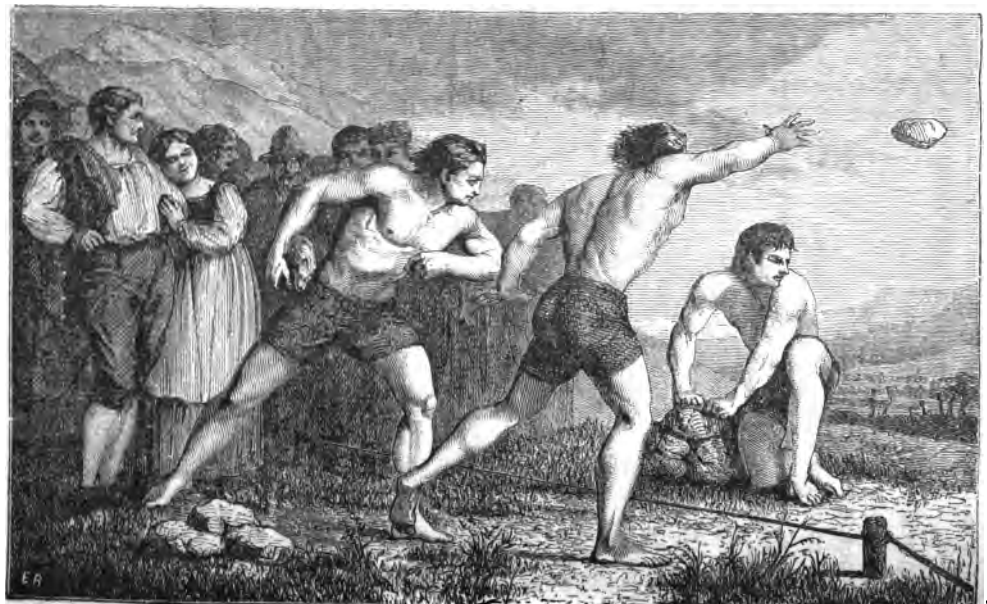
The quoit-thrower who, when commencing to take his part in the game, happened to let the instrument fall, was at once excluded from the contest. It was the practice of players to rub their right hands with mud or dust, and they treated in the same way the quoit, in order that, being thus made less smooth, it might be more easily handled. There has been much discussion on the points whether the quoit throwers wholly or partially divested themselves of their clothing, and whether they anointed themselves before entering the lists. It is beyond doubt that the use of oil would increase the elasticity and power of the muscles, but it is equally evident that if it was used the body must have been uncovered. The idea that the quoit-throwers engaged naked is also favoured by the fact that the game ranked third in the Pentathlon, or the five kinds of exercises in vogue at

the Olympic games. These were—Wrestling, running on foot, quoit-throwing, leaping, and javelin-throwing. Now, in both the departments which preceded it, the athletes were naked, and were rubbed with oil and dust, and therefore it is probable that on entering on the next they still remained unclothed.

The quoit-thrower at play was a favourite theme with the Greek artists, but no one has treated the subject so happily as the sculptor Myron. The original work has not been transmitted to us, but many copies exist, the best of which is to be found in the collection of antiquities in the British Museum. Myron, who flourished about 432 B.C., was gifted with a genius for modelling animals as well as human beings. All his works are instinct with life and action; and it is for these qualities that his statue of the *Discobolos* is so remarkable. It was greatly admired by the ancients, and Quintilian mentions it as a model of its kind. "How much more powerful," cries the Latin critic, "is the effect upon the spectator when the artist represents his subject in action and not fixed and in repose." It was in this precisely that the merit of the sculptor consisted. Many had previously represented the quoit-player before or after the exercise, but Myron was the first to render him in the very act of throwing.

The Statue of the Quoit-thrower.

The mountaineers of the Appenzell practise a similar game, though in their case the instrument employed is a



THROWING THE STONE IN APPENZELL.

stone of considerable weight. They assemble twice a year to hold their tournament. One stone serves for all the competitors; he who throws it furthest in the manner already described, gains the prize. He raises his right hand, which holds the projectile, to the height of his right shoulder, bends his body slightly, and, as he discharges the stone, runs forward a pace or two.

In Scotland, "putting the stone," a game in which a heavy stone is thrown forward from *over* the shoulder, is practised; as also, chiefly among the Highlanders, a game called "tossing the caber," or "throwing the hammer," to which reference will be made hereafter.

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## CHAPTER V.

### BOXING IN ENGLAND.

**The Age of Philosophy and Boxing—Boxing kept up by the Aristocracy—The Friend of a Prince of the Blood—J. Broughton, the Father of Boxing—The Last Days of a Professor—The Champions of England—The Gentleman Prize-fighter—The Breviary and Golden Book of Boxers—Rupture of Friendly Relations between England and America—Black and White—The Famous Crib—A Great Day—Extravagant Ovations—Cook's discovery of Boxing in Polynesia—Female Boxers in England—Sayers and Heenan.**

NOTHING less resembled Greece than England; no one less readily suggests the idea of the Greek than an Englishman; and yet, almost to the present day, Great Britain has maintained the practice of antiquity in regard to pugilism, but without that air of elegance and nobleness which distinguished even the least refined amusements of the Greeks. This is the position which England occupied until recently among the nations of Europe; that while in France, for instance, prize-fighting has never become a national institution, here, until recently, boxers did not require to induce the people to witness their exhibitions, for they had the people for the most part on their side.

It is somewhat singular that the English should have conceived a passion for pugilism in the same age—the eighteenth century—in which philosophy made such great advances among them, and through them influenced the whole continent. The rules which are observed to the present day and determine the conditions of the contest,

the laws to be observed during the "rounds" of which the battle consists, the rest allowed after every round, are the productions of Jack Broughton, a professional boxer, who managed to get the sporting world to adopt them in 1743. Sword combats began to be less the fashion during the reign of George I., and boxing, an amusement less offensive in appearance, replaced them in public favour.

Broughton was the first who assumed, or obtained by the suffrages of the world of sport, the title of "Champion of England," that glorious distinction which each performer in the ring resolves he will one day attain, or perish in the attempt. Few, however, long maintain this elevated position. "The belt" slips from the holder sooner or later, and the palm is handed to the first assailant who, having a rougher hide and a quicker hand and eye than his, thrashes him out of his envied honours.

From the first boxing was patronised by the great. Broughton, who had his theatre or academy in Tottenham Court Road, had for his chief admirer and zealous protector the second son of the king, the Duke of Cumberland, who regularly attended the boxing-school; and took the "professor" so closely into his friendship, that he attached him to his retinue while making a continental tour. Upon taking Jack to see the parade of grenadiers at Berlin, he asked him what he thought of those great fellows, and how he would like to encounter one of them in the ring. "Faith," replied the pugilist, "I could 'lick' a regiment, provided I had a dinner after each 'set-to.'"

Amateurs still speak in high terms of the originality of Broughton's style; but there was an end to all his greatness, for he was beaten at last. The thunderbolt in Broughton's case came in the shape and with the vulgar features of a

fellow named Slack, a butcher by trade, a boxer by accident, who, having taken offence at the champion of England upon the Hounslow race-course, had the temerity to send him a *cartel*. Full of contempt for an adversary whose name was unknown in the ring, Broughton never doubted for a moment that fortune would be faithful to him, and did not take the precaution of putting himself into training. So great was his confidence, that the evening before the contest he dreaded only one thing, viz., that Slack would not come forward on the morrow, and in fear of this, it is said, he sent him a present of ten guineas, to engage him not to break his word.

Before the combat commenced, on Tuesday, the 10th of April, 1750, Broughton had apparently so much the superiority, that the betting was ten to one in his favour. His advantage, however, was not of long duration, for after a few minutes the tide turned in favour of his opponent. Slack, driven back by the violent blows of the champion, rushed upon Broughton with a spring, and "landed" such a blow between his eyes as the great man did not expect, and left him as much blinded as surprised. The spectators, however, only remarked that Broughton no longer charged with his usual spirit, that he kept more upon the defensive; and his patron, the Duke of Cumberland, cried out to him, anxiously, "What's wrong, Broughton? You can't fight—you're beaten." "I no longer see my man," cried the unfortunate pugilist, "I am blind, but not beaten; put me only opposite him, and you will see." "The admiration of his friends was all at once changed into contempt," says an eye-witness; "their countenances were all colours and all lengths, for they had betted heavily at ten to one." Slack maintained his advantage, and won the battle in fourteen

minutes. In less than a quarter of an hour Broughton's fame and title of champion of England were gone.

The Duke of Cumberland, it is almost unnecessary to say, changed his opinion of Broughton, by whose defeat he had lost several thousand pounds sterling. Deprived of his patronage the prize-fighter could hardly make a livelihood, and though he still appeared in public, it was in the provinces, like those actors who, after failure in the metropolis, drag out a laborious life in the shady places of country towns. The "father of boxing" lived to his thirty-ninth year, died the 8th of January, 1789, and is buried in the Lambeth cemetery.

Was this pugilist really the inventor of boxing, or should he be regarded only as the restorer of an exercise practised a long time previously in England? It is said that the history of the art of boxing goes back in this country to the highest antiquity. In the time of King Alfred it is stated to have formed part of the military education. Richard I. was clever with his fists, as is proved by an anecdote told by Sir Walter Scott in his notes to "Ivanhoe." While a prisoner in Germany, the king received and accepted an invitation from a son of his jailor to a boxing-match. The blow dealt him by the plebeian made him stagger; but he replied with another upon the ear so terrific that he killed his antagonist on the spot. He had previously rubbed his hand over with wax, a practice unknown, Sir Walter believes, among the modern professors of the science. The great novelist is not correct here, however, as strange decoctions are used prior to a fight, in order to harden the hands and cause the fingers to stick tighter together. One of Shakespeare's heroes wins the heart and the hand of a heroine by acquitting himself worthily in a wrestling-match in her

presence. At whatever period the art was first introduced into England, it was in the eighteenth century, as already mentioned, that it first became popular among all classes. Great professors now began to give entertainments in the theatres, or opened theatres of their own; and academies where they taught the art were common. So great was the love of the people for boxing, that about the time of Broughton, it is known that an English lord fought a barber in the open street, and that a bishop had a similar encounter with a person who had injured him.

The title of Champion of England, after it had been lost by Broughton, devolved upon one of his illustrious disciples, Tom Johnson, whose first public set-to was in 1783. His surprising strength was first made known by an act which does the pugilist great credit. When about twenty-one years of age he was engaged on the Thames wharves in loading and discharging wheat. A fellow-workman, upon whom a wife and family were dependent, fell ill, and would have been destitute had not Johnson volunteered to do his companion's work as well as his own, on condition that the sick man should continue to receive his wages. The warehouse in which the wheat was stored was situated on a steep ascent, which, from the difficulties it presented to man or beast fated to ascend it loaded with a burden, came to receive the name of "Labour-in-Vain Hill." Up this ascent Tom Johnson might have been seen every day doing double duty, carrying two sacks instead of one, and thus earning for the poor family a livelihood during the time that its bread-winner was unable to do his work. On one occasion, by way of sport, Johnson lifted a sack of wheat with one hand and swung it round his head; on another he performed the same feat immediately after a successful encounter with

a celebrated pugilist, thus showing how little the struggle had unnerved or exhausted him.

Though he possessed great muscular strength he was not so elegant in his execution as one of his successors, John Jackson, called the "gentleman boxer," whose name was associated with the *beau monde* of his day. The heir of the English crown was sometimes present at his assaults, and Lord Byron, who was one of the best amateurs of his day, boasts frequently that this accomplished artist was his tutor.

It cannot be denied, indeed, that though prize-fighting has practically disappeared, never to be revived again in England, and boxing is taught simply as a gymnastic exercise, the ring has in its day had numerous influential admirers. Did this assertion require it, proof could be found in the fact that its traditions have been most assiduously collected. Many men, who but for their fighting qualities would have passed into the limbo of nameless blackguardism, have actually made some little mark in history, have had their biographies, generally discreditable, written, and their portraits, generally inane, engraved. A singular book, which may be described as the *livre d'or* of the sporting world, called "Boxiana; or, Sketches of Pugilism Ancient and Modern," has been compiled by a gentleman not without literary pretensions, Pierce Egan. This work, in five large volumes, contains histories of the great men who have figured in the ring, descriptions of the chief battles, &c., and is embellished, like its heroes, with numerous cuts.

The whole history of the ring may be found in "Boxiana," besides many things that it is well to know, in order to be able to circumvent an opponent. Strength alone will not suffice, and can be doubled by the help

of art, for a blow is effectual not so much from its force as from its form of delivery. The position of the body is of the greatest importance in boxing. When its weight is justly balanced, and the equilibrium is maintained, a man is in the best position for resisting attack from without. The attitude of the legs, and their degree of separation, are matters of the utmost importance. The left leg is advanced some distance in front of the right, as it is the left side which is presented to the adversary. The left arm serves as a shield to parry the blows, and the right is reserved in readiness to reply to any "message" from the antagonist.

The pugilist who bore the title of the champion of England at the time of the publication of "Boxiana," was Tom Crib, born the 8th of July, 1781, at Hanham, upon the borders of Somersetshire and Gloucestershire. Crib was one of the most popular prize-fighters that ever lived, and was patronised by the best society, was entertained by the nobles and gentry, and was the object of the ovations of the people, who forgot the *ci-devant* porter and coalman in the determined and unequalled boxer.

The public were vastly proud of Crib, because in two encounters he defeated America, in the person of Molyneux, a negro, who had come across the Atlantic, full of confidence, for the purpose of adorning his sable brows with the British laurels. The first battle took place on the 10th of December, 1810, at Copthall Common, Surrey. Molyneux was beaten, but he demanded his revenge, and a second meeting was arranged. The enthusiasm of the people in favour of the champion now rose to perfect frenzy, and the highest personages in the land are said to have been present at the fight. The spot fixed upon was Thistleton Gap, in Rutland-

shire, and the date of the event was the 20th of September, 1811. Tom Crib, the plebeian, had been monopolised for three months before the great day by one of his aristocratic backers, who took him with him to Scotland, in order to get him into the best possible training. Crib had to submit to all the fancies of his trainer, and at the end of the three months avowed that he would willingly fight any battle rather than go through a similar course of discipline a second time. On the eve of the great event it was not possible to obtain a bed at any price for twenty miles round the scene chosen for the contest, and in the morning there were twenty thousand spectators on the spot. A number of the most muscular pugilists of the day were appointed to guard the ring. An account of the battle would be out of place here, but the following extracts from the *bulletin* of the day will serve to show its principal features :—

"18th round. The champion of England struck his opponent on the breast with his right hand, and Molyneux answered with a blow on the head. In return the black received a hit on the forehead, which staggered him ; but with the violence of his own blow, Crib fell. *Both were in a state of extreme exhaustion.*

"19th round. Impossible to distinguish the features of the combatants. Their faces are horribly bruised, *but the difference of colour in the men enables us to distinguish them.*"

Among those present were the Marquis of Queensbury, Lord Yarmouth, Lord Pomfret, General Grosvenor, Major Mellish, Captain Barclay, who gained ten thousand pounds that day by the victory of the champion, who, on his side, got four hundred pounds. The total betting on the event reached over a million of money.

Crib's return to London was a triumphal progress. A

young gentleman "about town" took him back in his carriage, drawn by four horses, adorned with flags and ribands, and in the towns through which they passed Crib was received as a successful general who brings the news of his own victory. The approaches to his house in White Lion Street were crammed with a multitude, who kept up an incessant hurrah for the champion of England.

About this time an Edinburgh journal, remarking with some severity upon the money expended in entertaining Crib after his victory, said that a subscription opened for the purpose of sending help to the English prisoners then detained in France had not been responded to with an equal degree of generosity. Crib did not find the remarks of the Scotsman to his taste, so he replied, saying that he would have the honour of "making acquaintance with the writer of the article on the occasion of his approaching visit to Edinburgh," —an announcement which no doubt fluttered the Scotch editor not a little. We hear, however, no more of the affair.

The demonstration in honour of Tom Crib was calculated to have more effect upon his head than all the thumps of Molyneux. He was entertained to a great banquet at which gentlemen of title made speeches in his glorification and sang songs in his praise. A silver cup worth fifty guineas, together with its contents, raised on the spot, and amounting to eighty guineas, was presented to him. Immediately afterwards another banquet was got up for him, and the same silver cup went round the company with a highly favourable result On the lid of the cup the arms of the county of Gloucester were engraven, and underneath was a shield, the four quarters of which represented the scene of the battle, &c. The well-known line from Shake-

speare, "Damned be he who first cries, hold! enough!" was written below by way of legend.

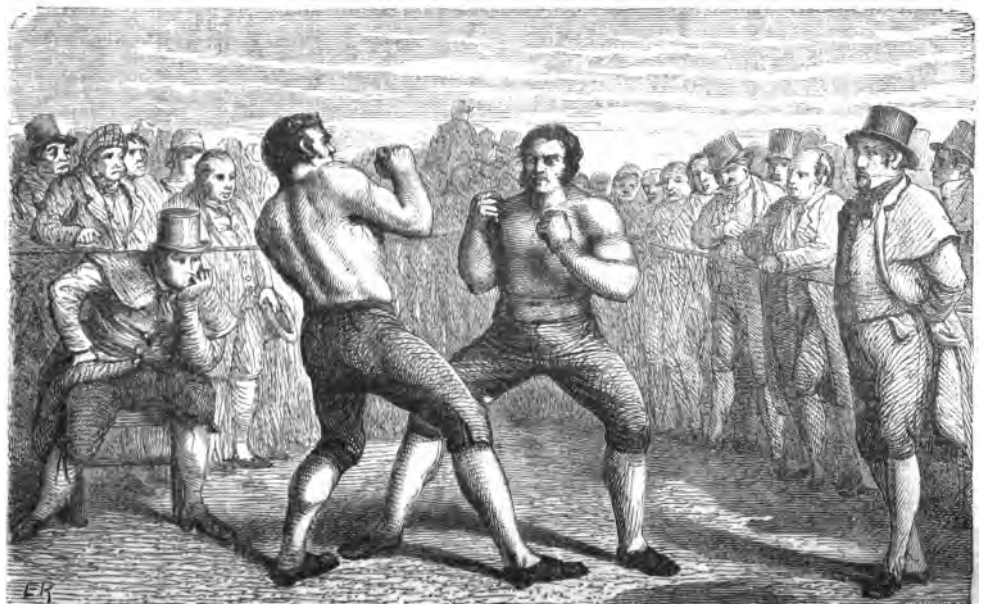
Prize-fights, which are now virtually abolished, were really not so dangerous to the combatants as they would appear. It is well known that in some cases the whole programme of the battle was previously arranged by the principals, and for a certain sum of money one of them consented to lose. In such a case the fight was only the representation of a play or farce that had already been rehearsed, and of which the actors are quite well prepared in their parts. "First blood," "first fall," &c. were all assigned; and the public were thus defrauded of the money they had betted upon men who, they really believed, were doing their best to win.

Captain Cook was surprised to find that boxing was practised among the islanders of Polynesia. After stating that their contests did not differ from those that took place in England, he goes on to say that he was considerably astonished to see a couple of stout young women advance and commence to box, without the least ceremony, and with as much skill as the men. The engagement was of short duration, for at the end of half a minute one of the ladies was *hors de combat*. The winner was as warmly applauded as the boxers of the other sex who had fought for a much longer time. Good humour continued to prevail on both sides, though many of the champions, both male and female, received blows from which they could not recover for many a day. Cook was ignorant, no doubt, that fistic encounters between females occasionally took place even in England, as is proved by an announcement which appeared in the papers of 1772, and reproduced in "Boxiana," to the effect that Elizabeth Wilkinson, of Clerkenwell, having had some words

with Anna Hyfield, and desiring to obtain satisfaction, invited her to come up on the stage, where they would box together; both holding half-a-crown in each hand, the first who let the coin drop to lose the battle. In answer to this challenge, came the following reply, stating that Anna Hyfield, of Newgate Market, having seen the challenge of Elizabeth Wilkinson, accepted her defiance, and would do her best to give her satisfaction. She only wanted one or two blows at her adversary. No dodging! Elizabeth Wilkinson had only to stand up!

Amongst the many celebrated prize battles fought in later days was the encounter between the redoubtable Tom Sayers and the American, Heenan, called the "Benicia Boy." The ring had fallen very low in public estimation by reason of the malpractices of its professors. Here, said the chief sporting journal of the period, was an opportunity of raising it once more to honour, and making it the sport of princes, poets, authors, and the educated classes of society.

Sayers was originally a bricklayer, and had already fought many battles, being always victorious, except once with the famous Nat Langham. Heenan had recently beaten a Californian "digger" named John Morrissey, now a member of the American Congress, and one of the wealthiest gaming-house proprietors in the United States. Both possessed high reputations, and were supported for large sums—Heenan on account of his great size, for he stood over six feet in height, and was remarkably muscular; while Sayers was noted for his "game" qualities, determination, and skill. Tom measured but five feet eight inches in height; still he was a big man, large shouldered and strong loined. The battle took place on April 17, 1860, at Farnborough, near Aldershot camp, before many thousand



A "FISTIC ENCOUNTER."

spectators. The *Times*, usually a non-pugilistic journal, so far as the P. R. is concerned, sent representatives, and over a column was allotted to a report of the proceedings, whilst *All the Year Round* published an article, and *Punch* a poem, and the Balzac of his day, Mr. W. M. Thackeray, wrote about it. Peers, statesmen, men of letters, painters, divines, and actors were present, and assisted to form the inner circle outside the "ring."

The men fought for over two hours, when the ring was broken, thirty-seven rounds having taken place. Heenan was now all but blind, and Sayers's right arm, the celebrated "auctioneer," was much injured. How the fight would have ended no one could tell, and eventually the stakes were drawn, each principal receiving a belt. Sayers's pluck, in standing before an adversary who felled him over a dozen times, was highly applauded, and the members of the Stock Exchange subscribed several thousand pounds, which were invested in the funds for his benefit. Heenan became afterwards a turf speculator, and is now in America. Sayers went round the country with a circus, and died, in 1865, of a broken constitution.

Since then there has been no prize battle to enlist the sympathies of the nation, although several scientific professors of the art are still living. The police have of late shown great activity in suppressing these encounters, and several of the most celebrated boxers of the day have been compelled to betake themselves to other pursuits, or cross the Atlantic, where "barneys," or "sold" fights appear to be as frequent as of late years they were on this side of the ocean.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ENGLISH WRESTLERS—T. TOPHAM.

Wrestling in England at the Present Day—Clubs and Meetings—The Games of Scotland—Throwing the Hammer—Cumberland and Westmoreland Men—Wrestlers of Cornwall and Devonshire—The Croc-en-jamb—The Kick—Sir Thomas Parkyns, of the Eighteenth Century—His Originality—T. Topham, his Immense Strength—His performances before the Physician Desaguliers.

LONG before the practice of boxing became general in Britain, the English cultivated wrestling with ardour. The Londoners were very fond of this exercise, and never failed to exhibit their abilities in this direction at the fair of St. Bartholomew, which took place every August. The practice of wrestling is continued to the present day in many parts of England—in the western counties, Cornwall and Devonshire; and in Cheshire, Lancashire, Cumberland, and Westmoreland, in the north. Clubs are organised in those counties to keep alive the sacred fire among the youths, to kindle zeal in the indifferent, and to award prizes to the successful. The Athletic Society of Liverpool recognises the pagan Hercules as its patron, and the torso of that famous athlete figures in the centre of the medals which they distribute.

Among the games practised in Scotland none is more popular than tossing the caber, which consists of throwing up a fir-tree of about twelve feet in length. The tree is entire, but care is taken to remove the branches and to shape it at one of the extremities. The player seizes the *caber* by this narrow end, raises it to the height of his shoulder, and

THROWING THE HAMMER IN SCOTLAND.

throws it up vertically. If it is successfully thrown it ought to come down upon its broad end, and stand a moment perpendicular before it falls. The "hammer," which is used in another Scotch game of a similar kind, is a ball of iron or brass fixed at the end of a shaft of about a yard in length. The competitor takes the shaft in his hand, and, whirling the hammer round and round several times, hurls it from him, taking a leap at the instant of throwing, to give more effect to the effort. In this game strength is not of so much account as skill and practice, without which, indeed, no one need attempt the feat. The longest throw wins the prize.

Amongst the best wrestlers in England are the north-countrymen, of whom a ponderous fellow, eighteen stone in weight, named Bill Jamieson, is the leader. Last year he challenged any man in the world, and offered to give one fall in seven, so that he would have to throw an adversary four times to win. Dick Wright, of Longtown, is also well known in the Cumberland and Westmoreland rings; and at the annual meetings of the Society at the Agricultural Hall, London, every Good Friday, these men are generally left in for the final falls in the "all weights" prizes. The terms in use in the north are the "cross buttock," the "back heel," the "in lock," the "swinging hipe," and many others. The men seize each other round the waist, and as no kicking is allowed, as in the west-country style, they grapple for some time before turning an opponent over, or "felling" him. Prizes are also given at many other towns, viz., at Manchester, Liverpool, and Newcastle, while at Carlisle several days a year are devoted to this sport.

Many wrestlers are also at the present day to be found in Cornwall and Devonshire. There is no rivalry between

the inhabitants of these bordering counties, who, keeping themselves apart, have no wish to measure themselves against each other, and if they compete, their striving does not part friendship. They practise modes of wrestling diametrically opposite, and nothing in the world would make them interfere with each other in any way. The men of Cornwall cultivate particularly the croc-en-jamb, which, after them, has received the name, now famous in England, of the *Cornish hug*. Those of Devon leave this practice to their neighbours; but, in return, they use a *coup* which is peculiarly dangerous and terrible—the *kick*, a compliment addressed usually to the legs of the adversary. Consequently, the combatants strive to keep their thighs, their calves, and shins, as safe as possible. If the reader has seen a bull-fight, he will remember that the Picadors take similar precautions. Under their breeches of buffalo hide they have leg-cases of sheet iron, the effect of which is to render harmless the horns of the enraged animal, but which at the same time are so heavy that once down the combatant cannot get up again.

The *Cornish Hug* is the subject of a very curious book, written in the last century, by Sir Thomas Parkyns, who was not a mere dilettante, but combined theory with practice. His portrait, somewhat disfigured by time, is still to be seen at the church of Bunny, Nottingham, where he is represented in the costume and attitude of a wrestler. For a magistrate, he employed his leisure in a somewhat singular fashion; but no man is always able to control his hobbies. Sir Thomas came into the world with a passion, or rather a mania for athletic exercises. The games which he had instituted in his parish and upon his domain of Bunny Park, were continued after his death (March 28, 1741), for he

left some prizes, the last of which were not distributed till 1810. This strange character, who seems to have escaped from Olympia, and to have wandered into our modern times by accident, amused himself by descending into the ring, and there disputing with his creditors the debts which he owed them. He sometimes won, and in that case put his money in his purse. His debts, however, were paid by his domestics, as a rule, all stout fellows who had given proof of their quality as wrestlers. Some of them had been famous athletes, particularly his butler and valet, both of whom he admitted into his service only after he had had proof of the solidity of their fists.

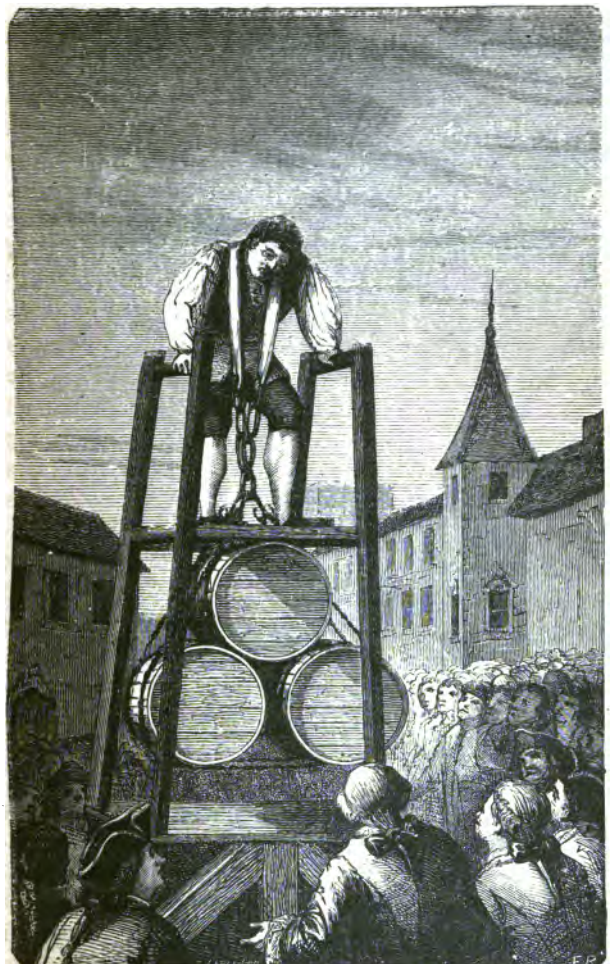
The virtue of temperance, which Sir Thomas practised for its own sake, carried him on to the age of seventy-eight years, without even having experienced a single illness in all his life; but at that age he was obliged to succumb to the embrace of the formidable wrestler who spares no one.

Sir Thomas Parkyns had also a mania for collecting coffins! He had already gathered a number in the churchyard, when the idea occurred to him to select one for his own use, and to have it placed opposite to him in the church, surmounted by his bust in marble, carved by his chaplain. It is to be hoped that the worthy ecclesiastic was worth more as a theologian than as a sculptor, for his talent as an artist is by no means great.

In the same century lived another very remarkable athlete, who performed surprising feats of strength—Thomas Topham, born at London in 1710. He established himself in 1741 at Derby, where he performed a prodigious feat of strength, that of lifting three casks filled with water, and weighing in all 1,836 lbs. One of the aldermen of Derby

seeing a man of plain exterior presenting himself before him, asked what was wanted, and was told by the "plain" man, Thomas Topham, that he requested permission to perform certain feats which required uncommon strength. Topham then was a man of five feet ten inches in height, about thirty years of age, well proportioned, and extraordinarily muscular. There was, however, nothing special in his appearance, if we except his armpits and hams, which, hollow in the case of ordinary people, were with him full of muscles and tendons.

At the time when Desaguliers was making his curious experiments in physics and mechanics, and was seeking to explain scientifically certain effects of muscular force, he went to see Thomas Topham, who was most honest in all his performances. "He entirely ignores the art of making his strength appear more surprising than it is," says Desaguliers, "and even undertakes sometimes things which become very difficult to him owing to his disadvantageous position, for he often attempts and does what people tell him other athletes have done who had special advantages which he does not possess. Having wagered that he would pull against two horses, supported by the trunk of a tree, he was pulled from his position with such violence that one of his knees coming into contact with the wood, the result was a fracture of the knee-pan, which caused the loss of part of the strength of that limb. Now, if he had put himself in an advantageous position, he could have pulled against four horses instead of two without the least inconvenience. It was probably in consequence of this accident that in his experiment with the casks he worked not with the muscles of the legs, as others who have attempted similar feats on a smaller scale have done, but with those of the neck and shoulders.



TOPHAM'S GREAT FEAT.

Topham had in himself the strength of twelve men united, as is proved by the feats which he performed before Desaguliers, who has done them the honour of admitting them into his "System of Experimental Philosophy," and has thus given them the stamp of unimpeachable authenticity. He took a bar of iron, the two ends of which he held in his hands, placed the middle of the bar behind the nape of his neck, and then brought the extremities forward. He then undid what he had done; that is, he made the bar of iron straight again—an operation much more difficult than the other. This feat he again performed, in consequence of having had a difference with some one of his acquaintance. He took an iron spit from the mantelpiece and twisted it round his neck with as much ease as a cravat or a handkerchief. All his neighbours endeavoured to live on a good understanding with this terrible man. The housewives hid from his notice all their pewter plates and pots, for fear he should take a fancy to crack up the one like egg-shells or roll up the other like a sheet of paper. The English magazines of the eighteenth century relate that he sometimes used to amuse himself by cracking cocoa-nuts, in the hearing of those who were near him, as another might crack hazel nuts. One night, perceiving a watchman asleep in his box, he carried both the man and his shell to a great distance, and deposited them on the wall of a church-yard. What must have been the astonishment of the guardian of the peace, when awaking in the morning he found himself so highly perched!

As frequently happens, Topham was not endowed with strength of mind equal to that of his body, and had a wife that rendered existence so insupportable that he committed suicide in the prime of life.

## CHAPTER VII.

### VENETIAN GAMES IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

**Hercules and Venice—To what Politics may descend—The Rivalry of the Castellani and the Nicoloti—The Battle of Fat Thursday—The Forze d'Ercole—Architecture of Flesh and Bones.**

THAT living in a dull, humid, and cold atmosphere, the English interest themselves in games of the kind which we have described is not at all astonishing. The amusements of a people are founded on their character, and the character of the people depends to a great extent on the geographical position of the country and the nature of the climate. The English are only faithful to their disposition in preferring sports that call for the exercise of great muscular strength and activity. But who would suspect that Venice, the gay and joyous, should have given itself up for many years—from the middle ages to the period of the Revolution—to amusements of the same description? How should these rude games come to have a place in the brilliant fêtes, of which the masquerade, dancing, love, and music, could never form too great a part, and the attractions of which drew strangers from all parts of Europe? Who could here have introduced games in which physical force alone was demanded, and among others the *Forze d'Ercole*, the labours of Hercules? What place could he have among a people so light and frivolous? Hercules spinning at the feet of Omphale perhaps, but surely not Hercules the destroyer of lions and hydras! These exhibitions had a very ancient origin, and

an object which strangers could not fathom, but which the ever-watchful government of Venice knew well how to appreciate.

The Senate encouraged an ancient rivalry that existed between two powerful factions in Venice, the Castellani and the Nicoloti, who took part in the athletic exercises, and competed in displaying the highest degree of strength and skill. These parties derived their names from the quarters of the city which they inhabited, the streets of Castello and San Nicolo, on opposite banks of the Grand Canal, and connected by a bridge, which formed a sort of neutral ground, as it were, between two hostile camps, and often became a field of battle hotly contested. It is not easy to discover what was the origin of the rivalry between the Castellani and the Nicoloti. Some say that it dates from the earliest times of Venice, when the islands which now form the city of the lagunes were not united, when the rights of each being still undecided, and the limits of their property undefined, disputes continually arose about the right of fishing in a certain reach of the sea, or of hunting on a certain strip of land. Others have traced the origin of the quarrel to the time when the inhabitants of Equilium and those of Heraclea, deadly enemies, chased from their respective towns by the hordes of barbarians that poured down upon them over the Alps, sought refuge in the midst of the lagunes, and established themselves upon opposite banks of what afterwards came to be known as the Grand Canal. In mingling with the original inhabitants they infected them with the spirit of mutual jealousy and aversion which animated themselves, and which only became intensified with time.

When the partisans of these hostile camps met in the

streets, like the fabled Capulets and Montagues of Mantua, or the royalists and reformers in the High Street of Edinburgh, in Queen Mary's time, a deadly party fight immediately took place. The authorities did not feel themselves bound to interfere; on the contrary, they allowed blood to be spilt, not, perhaps, in too great profusion, but sufficiently to constitute a new cause of quarrel, and to awaken in the hearts of the vanquished a burning desire for vengeance which should be gratified on another occasion. The Lacedæmonians urged their youth to join in similar contests, says Amelot de la Houssaye, but it was for the purpose of training them for war, whereas in the case of the Venetian government the object was to sow and to nourish dissension among the populace. In fact, if the citizens, instead of quarrelling among themselves, had become united, and in doing so had gained confidence in themselves, they would have overturned the power of the aristocracy, for they must have seen how superior they were then in numbers to the ruling class, which jealously kept all the wealth and influence of the state to themselves. Divide and crush, this was the internal policy of the government of Venice.

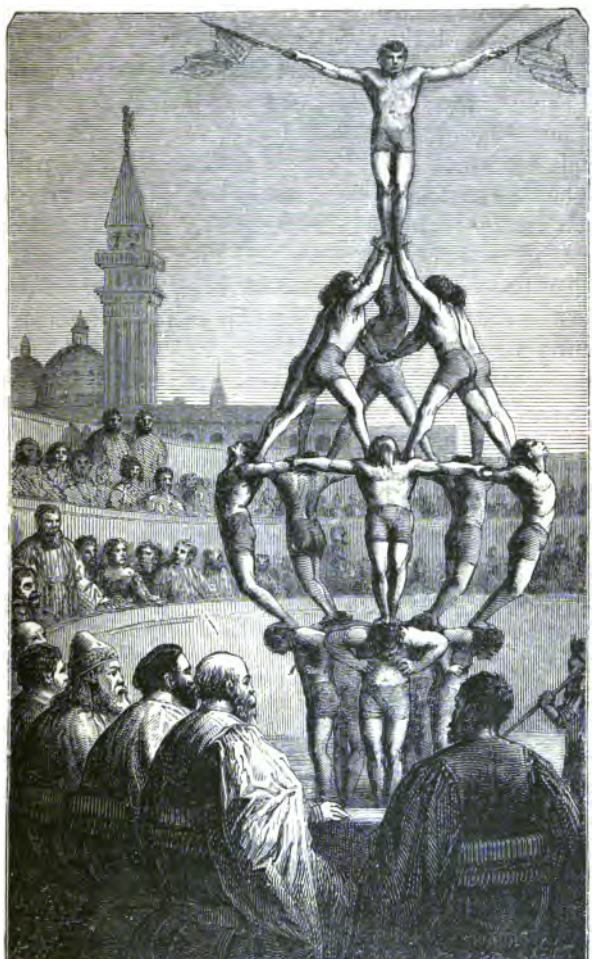
The Castellans and Nicolites did not perceive that by their dissensions they were only strengthening a power jealous of its privileges, and opposed to the rights of the people, a power, too, which they could easily have broken down by their union. Another cause of quarrel between the parties was that the Nicolites had the privilege of electing a special doge for their own quarter; and this potentate, who was always an artisan of San Nicolas, was the mark for many a pun, sarcasm, and epigram, on the part of the Castellani. But it was particularly on solemn fête days that the smouldering hate of these factions broke out, and that from

taunts they proceeded to blows. The *Giovedì grasso* (Fat Thursday, a famous holiday in Venice) was always eagerly taken advantage of by the rival clans, and was invariably the occasion of a grand fight between them, the field of battle being the bridge which we have mentioned as communicating between the hostile quarters. The fray took place at its middle point, whither each side rushed from the bank which formed the boundary of its quarter, and the question to be decided was which faction should force a passage to the territory of the other. It was never concluded without the shedding of blood; and as the bridge had no parapet, the day after the encounter was generally employed in fishing out the dead bodies from the canal.

The *Forze d'Ercole* had no such bloody consequences. For the *Guerra dei Pugni* (fistic encounters) any one would do; but for these *Labours of Hercules* only the very best men were selected. The feat which received this name was the formation of pyramids of human beings, thirty in number, and all of great strength. The base was composed of about twenty men, and the tiers that rose above went on successively diminishing up to the summit, which was formed of a single young athlete, who, upon his dangerous perch, performed endless evolutions. After this youth had done all he knew, he bowed to the Doge and the assembled grandees, and then leapt down from the top of the pyramid upon a mattress or cushion which was spread for him on the ground. The men who had supported him then bowed and followed him in his perilous descent, and so on, one after the other, to the lowest tier. When one faction had finished its feats, the other came upon the arena. The victory was won by the troupe that formed the highest pyramid, or maintained its balance for the longest space of time.

Their skill did not, however, end here, for other feats which they practised were in the highest degree astonishing, the more so that the performers were simple artisans, and did not make athletics their trade. It is said that they could form wide spanning arches, erect colonnades, pile up pediments—in short, realise the wonders of architecture, imitating, for example, the designs of Palladio, without stone, mortar, or any material but their own bodies.

To Jean Cousin, a celebrated painter of the French school, who had a great reputation during the reigns of Francis I., Henri II., and Charles IX., is attributed a painting on enamel, illustrative of these games, or at least it is so explained by Landon in his "Annales du Musée." The picture, which then belonged to a distinguished collector, M. Cambry, the author of numerous archæological works, represents, according to Landon, "a variety of gymnastics, known in Italy as the 'Forzi,' and practised in Venice. The six figures which form this composition are remarkable for the boldness and grace of their attitudes. If the drawing is not absolutely correct, at least it is distinguished by a certain grandeur, and that sort of elegance which connects it with the Florentine school." The composition, at all events, is original, and we are not astonished that this work has been, as the same critic says, "prized for its originality and the manner of its execution."



VENETIAN GAMES IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### SCANDERBERG AND THE TURKS.

The Grand Turk's Wrestlers in the Fifteenth Century—Scanderberg and the Scythian Giant—Persian Horsemen—A Good Swordsman—Men Beheaded by Sabre Strokes.

At the time when the Venetian games, which did not go out of fashion till the end of the eighteenth century, were still in their glory, there lived not far from the territory of the republic of the lagunes, a man who could alone perform all the "Labours of Hercules." Few men, in point of physical strength, have surpassed this hero of the middle ages, who became the terror of the Turks, after having been their *protégé*.

This was the famous Scanderberg, King of Albania, whose real name was Georges Castriota. Born in 1414 he was delivered as a hostage by his father, the King of Albania and Epirus, to Sultan Amurath II., who brought him up at his court. Castriota, remarkable for his personal beauty, excelled in all equestrian exercises and in the management of the sword and bow. His delight was to compete with the young Turkish nobles in their jousts and tourneys, and on almost every occasion he bore away the palm.

Feats of physical strength were always held in high esteem by the Turks. No sooner had the Sultans become masters of Constantinople than they began to maintain at their court a troupe of professional athletes, who performed in their presence from time to time. These athletes, who

were named *gouressis*, were men of the greatest daring and strength, and were, as a rule, natives of barbarous countries, such as India and Tartary. They were not slaves, like the other servants of the Grand Seigneur, but, entering his service of their own accord, were entirely free.

In their exercises they employed all the feints and tricks of the ancient athletes, in order to bring their opponents to the ground; but they made use, besides, of certain peculiar processes of gymnastics which were not recognised by the Greeks. They were in the habit of scratching and biting the noses and ears of their opponents, sometimes carried away these features bodily with their teeth, and in fact made it a rule to inflict as much injury as they could, worrying over their prey like dogs over a fallen deer. What animated them with this spirit of ferocity was not so much the desire of victory, as a lively appreciation of the handful of ducats which the Grand Turk threw to the victor, and sometimes to both combatants, when he was satisfied that each had done his best to disfigure his opponent. The *gouressis* fought entirely naked, with the exception of the *greguees*, a sort of close-fitting drawers made of hide, covering the body from the waist down to a little above the knee. This garment, like the rest of the body, was rubbed with oil, that no "hold" might be afforded to the antagonist. The battle over, the combatants enveloped themselves in long pelisses or cassocks, divided in front and buttoned half way up; a large girdle with gold stripes was rolled round their middle, in the Turkish fashion, and on their heads they placed a bonnet called *taquia*, made either of black velvet, and shaped like that worn by the Poles, or of the dressed skin of a lamb. The top part of the bonnet fell back upon the shoulder. Thus accoutred they marched in companies

of ten or twelve, ready to measure themselves with any who might attempt to interrupt them. People, however, took very good care not to pick quarrels with them, as much because of the fury which they displayed in fighting, as the expertness which they exhibited in a practice to which they had been trained from their infancy, and in which it was very difficult to find any to surpass or even to equal them.

The company of *gouressis* got up entertainments for the diversion of the Sultan, when he had nothing better with which to amuse himself, though in the time of the paladins and wandering knights he always had opportunities of witnessing more noble and attractive spectacles.

One day, for example, there arrived at Adrianople a Scythian of enormous height, who gave a general defiance to the whole court to single combat. As no one seemed anxious to take up the glove, the adventurer was beginning to flout the Turks, and brag that they were all afraid of him, when all at once young Scanderberg, though from his rank he was far above such an adversary, stepped forward, to the great astonishment of all. The court trembled for the youth. It was not long, however, before they were reassured, for he threw himself quickly upon his enemy, seized with his left hand the uplifted arm of the giant—which in the next moment would have come down with deadly effect—and at the same time sank his poniard in the braggart's throat.

Some time afterwards two Persian cavaliers, mounted upon magnificent horses, presented themselves before Amurath, who was then holding his court at Pruse in Bithynia, and offered their services, asking as a favour that their powers should be at once put to the proof. Scanderberg consented to fight them single-handed, on the condition that they should attack him "one at a time." The combat

had scarcely begun before the second of the strangers, breaking his word, dashed lance in hand up to Scanderberg, who was at the time engaged with the other opponent. Seeing him hurrying up, the youth did not wait for the assault; he ran towards him at full speed, and with one terrible blow made him pay dear for his treachery. Having thus got rid of this combatant, he turned to the other, scimitar in hand, struck him on the right shoulder near the neck, and drove his blade with such tremendous force that the man was cut in two down to the very haunches. The young prince offered the heads of the Persians to the sultan. "He was received," says R. P. du Poncet, the historian of Scanderberg, "with all the honours which his triumph merited, and which showed him how high he had risen in the esteem of the monarch." It was for these and similar feats of strength and valour that the Turks gave him the name of Skander, or Iskanderberg—Prince Alexander.

He was a man of great stature, and his strength was such that his arm, naked summer and winter, overthrew all obstacles. He used a scimitar almost as renowned as the Durandal of Roland, or the Excalibur of Arthur. In size and weight it was in proportion to his figure and powers, and, in case of need, he always carried with him in a large scabbard another weapon of the same make. The precaution was not a useless one, when we consider the terrible feats which this swordsman was called upon to perform. English historians, in recognising the fame of the "fearless De Courcey," Lord of Ulster, in the thirteenth century, mention that one day in the presence of the King of England he clove a steel helmet with one blow of his sword, and sank his weapon so deeply in the wooden block upon which it stood that not a man at court but himself could

pull it out again. Deeds like that, however, seem to have been only child's play to Scanderberg, who is said to have often cloven in two men who were clad in armour from head to foot.

The Sultan Mahomet II., who at the time was living on good terms with Scanderberg, resolved to beg from that hero the renowned sword, of the virtues of which every one spoke, and by means of which Scanderberg accomplished so many marvels. The hero hastened to offer the weapon to his sovereign. Mahomet tried it, and made the stoutest warriors of his court try it; but seeing that no extraordinary effect was produced, he sent it back with the message that he possessed many of as good, if not better temper. Scanderberg received the sword without a frown, used it in presence of the imperial messenger, in a way which showed his wonderful strength, and then dismissed the astonished official with these simple words, "Tell your master that though I sent him my scimitar, I did not send him my arm."

His skill in making a head fly off with one blow of the sabre passed into a proverb. It was in this way that he killed the savage bull that ravaged the land of the Princess Mamise, his sister, and a wild boar, the terror of all the country. Scanderberg had determined to punish a certain Ballaban, who had been convicted of cruelties towards the Albanians. One day the brother and the nephew of his enemy were brought to him bound together. Transported with rage at the sight of them, and without permitting them to raise a hand, he cut them in two with one stroke of his weapon.

## CHAPTER IX.

### SOME HISTORICAL PERSONAGES.

The Elector of Saxony, Augustus II.—A German Phantom—That which falls on the ground is not always what we throw out of the window—The Chamberlains of the Emperor of Brazil—A Bath taken against the Grain—Maurice of Saxony—Mademoiselle Gauthier of the Comédie-Française—Metal Plates rolled up like Paper—The Game of Quintain—The Manor of the Comte de Foix—Froissart the Historian—The Fête de Noël—The Ass lifted by the Power of the Wrist—Man after the Ass—The *Coup de Jarnac.*

ONE night, as Joseph I., Emperor of Germany, then only King of the Romans, was sleeping in his apartment in the palace at Venice, he was suddenly aroused by an unusual noise. It seemed to him that some one was entering his chamber, and he believed at first that one of his domestics had come in by mistake; but he soon perceived that the sound was drawing nearer, and clearly distinguished the rattling of chains along the floor. All at once a terrible voice rang out: "Joseph, King of the Romans! I am a spirit that endures the pains of purgatory, and am sent by God to warn you to turn aside from the abyss with which your intimacy with the Elector of Saxony is about to hurl you. Renounce his friendship, or prepare yourself for eternal damnation!" Here the clanking of the chains redoubled, and the awful voice continued—"You do not reply, Joseph! Are you so wicked as to resist God? Is the friendship of a man more precious to you than that of the Being to whom you owe all things? I leave you to

think of what you have to do; in three days I will come to receive your answer, and if you persist in seeing the Elector of Saxony the ruin of both is certain." With these words the spectre disappeared.

On the morrow, when the Elector Augustus II., who was then a guest at the court of Vienna, and who had a thousand reasons for cultivating the friendship of the King of the Romans, came into the apartment of the latter, his surprise was extreme. Joseph, whom he had left the preceding evening gay and full of mirth, now lay on his bed pale, weak, and trembling. "Listen a moment, cousin," said he, "and perhaps in the end you too will be filled with fear." And then he told the Elector the adventure of the preceding night.

Augustus was not a man to be deceived by a gross imposture. He got his friend to promise silence as to what had happened, and to permit him to sleep in his chamber on the night of the promised visit. Accordingly on the third night the spectre returned, as it had promised, and cried out, "Joseph, Joseph, King of the Romans!" Augustus, a man of herculean strength, returned a very unexpected answer. He marched straight up to the phantom, seized it, carried it to the window, and launched it into space, crying, "Return to purgatory whence you have come."

It was a spectre—that is a vague, supernatural form, which Augustus threw out of the window. But what do you think fell to the ground? Nothing less than a reverend Father Jesuit! There is certainly a Providence watching over phantoms, for this one, notwithstanding his terrible fall, got off with only a broken thigh, as the Baron of Pœllnitz tells us in his book, "La Saxe Galante." One of the laity would certainly have lost both his legs and more in such an adventure.

But what was done as an act of vengeance by Augustus II., was indulged in by another sovereign, Dom Pedro I., emperor of Brazil, as a pleasant pastime. At Rio Janeiro, the carnival permits of a great number of practical jokes, of which the commonest is to squirt water over everybody one meets. To do this, passers-by often slip into houses to find their victims. Those who do not find this rough amusement to their taste, have only to barricade their doors, but on the contrary, those who relish the giving and taking of a little fun, at this time leave their doors open, so that the first comer may enter, for during these holidays all social distinctions are held in abeyance. The passer-by who has been wetted, or it may be drenched to the skin in this way, enters the house from which the "visitation" has come, and revenges himself on any one he meets. In taking their part in the popular amusements, the ladies made use of pretty little instruments, which discharged perfumed water. The emperor was passionately fond of this holiday horse-play; and there was not a house he would not enter, if the proprietors had not taken care to exclude intruders. At the last festival which took place under his reign he was at his country house of Saint Christophe, and being on that account unable to gratify his taste for the favourite amusement, but unwilling that the season should pass without his indulging in it, he hit upon an ingenious device. It is not said whether his idea was a premeditated one, or whether the notion came suddenly, when he was sailing in a small boat close by the shore, accompanied by two chamberlains, dressed in their most splendid uniforms, to do honour to their royal master. But be this as it may, the emperor suddenly seized the unhappy courtiers by the scruff of the neck, one in each hand, and after holding them suspended for a

few seconds above the water, plunged them into it, one on each side of the boat. The shore was lined with multitudes of people watching the royal barge as it moved along; and when the emperor was seen dipping his chamberlains, and thus showing his love of the popular holiday amusement, roars of laughter and loud applause came from the shore. But what appearance did the unhappy chamberlains make when pulled out of their unexpected bath? Of this the chronicle does not inform us. We are mentioning, as may be observed, examples of physical strength drawn from the highest ranks, but this is done advisedly, for among them muscular power is a greater distinction than among the classes whose nerves are strung by daily labour. It is no great distinction for a man to excel in the pursuit of that which he has made a profession.

Having dealt with kings, we come to the sons of kings; and first, to the son of the Elector to whom reference has already been made. This personage, who it may be stated was only the natural son of Augustus, was the famous Maurice, Count of Saxony, the hero of Fontenoy, and he inherited the physical vigour of his father, the only considerable legacy which descended to him. On the occasion of a certain hunting expedition the Count, who had invited his friends to luncheon, and was made aware that the corkscrews had been forgotten, "What does it matter?" said Maurice; and taking a long nail, for which he called, he twisted it round with his fingers, and with this extemporised implement opened half a dozen bottles. Among the hunting train were many stout nobles, who tried to imitate the feat, but as none of them possessed the wonderful physical strength of the Count, their attempts were in vain.

While residing in London, Maurice used to amuse him

self by rambling about in the streets. In one of these excursions a quarrel arose, from some cause or other, between him and one of the dustmen whose business it was to gather together and remove the mud, refuse, and filth of the metropolis. The Count, who was a skilful boxer, allowed his adversary to approach, and as soon as the man came within his reach, seized him by the head, threw him up into the air with all his strength, and let him drop right into the middle of his own mud-cart.

It is well known that this same son of Augustus and the Countess of Kœnigsmark could break the strongest horse-shoes with his hands. Having on one occasion stopped at a village during fair-time, to have his horses shod, he got a number of new shoes, of which he cracked five or six as if they had been glass. The farrier, not to be outdone, took the six-franc piece which the Count had given him, and after striking it a blow with his chisel, broke it in two with his fingers. Maurice gave the farrier another similar piece of money, which he treated in the same way, saying "Monseigneur, you see that your crowns meet no better fate than my horse-shoes." On looking at the broken pieces, however, Maurice perceived the deception, but instead of being angry, walked away, rubbing his hands, highly delighted that in physical strength he was still unrivalled.

He did, at last, meet with one who resisted him, and, astonishing to say, his opponent was a woman. That a woman should be able to hold out against Maurice of Saxony is what one can hardly believe, and the thing seems all the more improbable seeing that the lady—Mademoiselle Gauthier, an actress who belonged to the Comédie Française—did not fear to meet him. The contest was who should put down the other's wrist, and though the Count won with

difficulty, he owned that of all the people who had striven with him in this exercise, Mademoiselle Gauthier had held out against him longer than any other.

The power of this lady's arm was something far beyond the common. She could with her fingers roll up a piece of silver plate with as much ease as the renowned Englishman, Topham. It was, however, less on account of her wonderful physical strength than of her singular career that Madlle. Gauthier demands attention. Born in 1692, she made her first appearance upon the stage at the age of seventeen, and achieved great success. To the advantages of unusual charms, she added many accomplishments. She painted miniatures with great taste and power, and wrote verses which were by no means without merit. Up to the age of thirty years she led a life of luxury and pleasure; plunging, as she herself says, into *une mer de délices*, when one day, the anniversary of her birth, by the merest chance she happened to enter a church, and heard mass. It was said that during the service she was so deeply touched that she left with the fixed determination of changing her conduct and profession. On the 20th of January, 1725, she took the veil of the Carmelite nuns at Lyons, under the name of "Sister Augustine of Pity." And even as up to this period she had been wholly devoted to a dissipated life, so now she showed an equal ardour for religion. The convert lived for thirty-two years in the cloister, without for a single instant regretting the world, so brilliant but so hollow, which she had abandoned. Gossip has it that repentance and piety had but little to do with her conversion, and that a love affair which did not prosper was the sole cause of the sudden change.

But, quitting the elevated spheres of royalty and religion,

our only difficulty in endeavouring to collect a series of curious facts is one of choice amidst a multitude of instances. For, descending a few degrees from the throne, we find ourselves having to do with a nobility which dedicated itself by tradition and by taste to all bodily exercises, and, in short, bestowed more care in developing physical strength than in cultivating intellect. The Maréchal de Tavannes (1509—1573), in his memoirs shows us the youth of his time competing with each other most keenly in leaping, running, and throwing the bar. And this was not from want of occupation, as one would at first be tempted to believe. For gentlemen, peace was not always an interval of idleness, but rather a pause between two campaigns, which the most prudent turned to good account in perfecting themselves in the trade of war, and in accustoming themselves to dangers to which they might be subjected in the future. "They employed their time," says this general, "in leaping, wrestling, and in sham fights, familiarising themselves with perils in peace that they might not fear them in war." The end which they proposed to themselves was not so much to increase their bodily strength as to render themselves inaccessible to fear. Those who neglected this preparation for camp life had often cause to repent it. Entering the army without training, they were easily beaten, "as the French were formerly by the Italians, and as the Italians now are by the French."

They followed the example of the Turks, who being in the habit of striking upon each other's bucklers, acquired great strength in the arms. From the development of the body to which the Turks attained, arose, without doubt, the proverb, "As strong as a Turk." Western nations, in order to get their hands used to it, practised the game of

*quintaine* or *quintain*, which consisted in running at and striking an artificial head, made of wood or pasteboard. It was thus that they strengthened their arms; "for," says the Maréchal de Tavannes, "it is by their arms that they acquire and defend kingdoms." That it was thus that the strength of man was increased by daily exercises, Froissart explains to us in his curious chronicles.

In the south of France lived a rich, powerful, and great noble, always surrounded by a numerous following of knights, squires, and pages. Froissart was for some time his guest. His disposition was far from being mild, as was proved by his conduct towards his young son, detailed by the historian. The Comte de Foix lived in the country of Béarn throughout the winter, which is there very rigorous, without a fire, or with only a very small one, with which his court were by no means satisfied. However, on Christmas Day, 1388, having after dinner ascended into his gallery, which was reached by a great staircase of four-and-twenty steps, he looked at the fire, then burning very low, and complained of it to those who stood around him. "It is only right to say," says Froissart, "that it was freezing very hard that day, and was exceedingly cold." "What a miserable fire for this time of the year," exclaimed the count. One of the lords in attendance heard and paid special attention to the count's complaint. This was no other than Ernaulton of Spain, who a short time before had done marvels at the siege of Lourdes, striking down with his hatchet all who came within his reach, and leaving dead upon the field every one whom he struck. "For he was a long tall man," says the gossiping Froissart, "big in his limbs and by no means burdened with flesh." Ernaulton had seen from the windows of the gallery, which looked down upon the court,

a number of asses that had arrived laden with wood for the service of the castle. To seize the largest of these quadrupeds, wooden burden and all, to swing them lightly upon his shoulders, to mount the stairs, and, breaking through the crowd of knights that surrounded the fire-place, to tumble into the hearth upon the fire-dogs both the wood and the ass, the latter with his feet in the air, was for Ernaulton the work of a few seconds. The *coup de force* was wonderful; and the stroke of wit of tumbling the ass as well as the wood into the fire was wonderful, too, in its own way. The feat was almost as great as that of Milo of Croton, who carried an ox on his shoulders into the stage of Olympia. Both the host and his guests made great rejoicing over it, and "marvelled at the strength of the squire, who without any help had lifted such a great burden, and carried it up the stairs."

But that which was only a means of amusement during peace became a most useful expedient in the time of war. If, instead of the ass, a two-footed animal "without feathers" were thus caught up and carried off, without being the object of such rude humour as that of Ernaulton, the action might be one of the greatest importance.

"Come hither," said the Marquis of Pescare, Governor of the Duchy of Milan for the Emperor Charles V., to a servant named Lupon, "I wish to be accurately informed of the state of the French army. Make your way to the enemy's camp, and try if you can learn anything." Lupon was, as we learn from Paul Jove, quoted by Simon Goulart in his "Trésor d'Histoires Admirables" (1610), "A man so vigorous and light of foot that, with a sheep upon his shoulders, he could distance any competitor who tried to race with him" Lupon thought long of what he should do;

A STORY FROM FROISSART.

then, deciding upon his course, he came close to one of the French sentinels, who was not upon his guard. Although the man was of great stature, and stout in proportion, Lupon turned him up and threw him upon his shoulders. The poor fellow struggled hard, fighting with all the strength at his command, and shouting at the top of his voice for some one to come to him, but Lupon got him saddled upon his neck, and then set out with him at a great pace. He never dropped his burden till he reached his own camp, when he tumbled the sentinel at the feet of the Marquis, who, "having laughed his fill at the stratagem, and having also learned from the mouth of the sentinel, so pleasantly brought to camp upon this singular two-legged jennet, what was the condition of the French camp, at once ordered an assault."

Francis of Vivonne, Lord of Chasteigneraye, who lived at the court of Francis I., was endowed with a strength not less remarkable. He seized a bull by the horns and stopped him, after the example of that ancient athlete, Polydamas of Thessalia, who held the animal firmly by the hind legs. Chasteigneraye excelled in all bodily exercises, especially in running and wrestling. He was accounted the most accomplished master of the sword at the French court, which was not surprising, as he made fencing his chief occupation, forming his "style" after the Italian masters, then believed to be the most skilful in the world. He was so clever as a horseman, that in the game of the ring, he threw his lance into the air, and caught it again many times consecutively before raising the ring. But he shone principally in combats *corps à corps*, and devoted himself to encounters on foot with the lords of his day, who attempted to revive in France the gladiatorial combats of the Romans. In

these deadly fights the great stature and strength of Chasteigneraye gave him almost always the advantage. His father, André of Vivonne, Grand Seneschal of Poitou, would no doubt have had him at his birth plunged into the river Styx, that his members might thereby receive an invincible temper; but as geographers had not then discovered the topographical position of that river, he had recourse to other expedients, and it is reported nourished his son from his earliest infancy on food with which powders of steel, gold, and iron were mixed. Brantôme, who records this fact, adds that the Grand Seneschal was let into this secret by a great physician of Naples, who vaunted its efficacy. Was it to this singular treatment, or to his natural disposition, that Chasteigneraye owed that strength which was the admiration of his contemporaries? This much is certain, that it was by his physical advantages that he so rapidly made his way at court. Unfortunately his boundless confidence and presumption were fatal to him in the end, another point in which he resembled certain famous athletes of antiquity.

Contemporary with Chasteigneraye there resided at the court of Francis I. Guy Chabot, Lord of Monlieu, and afterwards of Jarnac. Like his countryman and friend Chasteigneraye, he commenced his career as *enfant d'honneur*, *i.e.*, page to the king, and made a brilliant figure at court, but the skill and boldness of François de Vivonne eclipsed his fame, a circumstance, however, which did not prevent the friends from measuring themselves against each other in the *salles d'armes*, and in the tournaments. "Chabot," says a chronicler of the times, "as a courtier and lady's man paid greater attention to the arts of dress than to the practice of arms and war."

Certain reports which touched the honour of the Chabot-Jarnacs having been spread abroad at court, the Dauphin, subsequently Henry II., gave further currency to them, and they came at last to be mentioned in the country. Charles de Chabot, the father of Guy, who was thus maligned, immediately set out, accompanied by his son, to Compiègne, where the court then sojourned, for the purpose of obtaining redress. Both threw themselves on their knees before the king, and demanded justice. Guy Chabot summoned the originator of the calumnious reports to declare himself, and asserted that those who had repeated the rumours lied in their throats. The Dauphin said never a word, but Chasteigneraye, who had embraced the cause of Diana of Poictiers, and consequently of the Dauphin, in opposition to the party of the Duchesse d'Etampes and of the king, for which side Chabot had declared, took all the blame upon himself, in the hope that in fighting the Dauphin's quarrel he should win the favour of the future king. He accepted all the consequences of his falsehood, relying on his strength and skill in sword-play. A duel was agreed upon, but Francis I. would never authorise it during his life-time, and consequently it did not take place till after his decease and the succession of his son, Henri II. The lists were opened at St. Germain, on the 10th of July, 1547. Both combatants, in accordance with the fashion of the time, implored the help of heaven. They chanted masses, and visited churches, as if heaven could be interested in such wretched quarrels. Chasteigneraye advanced to the fight confident of victory, and, indeed, with this expectation he had caused a banquet to be spread in his tent in order to celebrate his triumph. Guy Chabot appeared to have at first the worst of the battle, and, indeed, at one moment seemed on the point of falling.

This, however, was only a feint, for, dodging downwards, he delivered two thrusts on his enemy's left ham, this blow being ever afterwards known as the *coup de Jarnac.* Chasteigneraye fell, and found himself at the mercy of Guy Chabot, who offered him to the king, if Henry desired to beg the life of his champion, but seeing that Chasteigneraye made a movement to get free, "Do not stir," cried the victor, "or I shall kill you." "Kill me then," cried Chasteigneraye; suffering not so much from his wound as from the injury which had been inflicted upon his self-love. He was all the less willing to survive his disgrace from the fact that he had made so sure of victory; but as the historian says, "God, who watches over all things, arranged that he who was the conqueror in anticipation should remain the vanquished in fact." Foaming with rage, Chasteigneraye tore off the dressing of his wound, and expired blaspheming.

The people, who detest calumniators and braggarts, vowed themselves in favour of the cause of Chabot, which was, indeed, the right one. They came in vast numbers from Paris to Saint Germain to be present at the duel of the two courtiers, and the whole mob of scholars, artisans, and "loafers" rushed to the tent of Chasteigneraye, the vanquished man, "as on a fallen city," says the Maréchal de Vielleville, in his "Memoirs." The supper set out was carried off raw by the porters and lackeys, while the multitude, "overturning the pots and saucepans, scattering the soups and entrées," devoured everything that remained. The silver plate, and the rich services, which the intending host had borrowed from the principal mansions of the court, "disappeared under the labours of the robbers, amidst the most fearful confusion." The archers of the guard, advancing to stop the pillage, had the greatest difficulty in dispersing

the crowd that had invaded the tent and banquet-pavilion, and after the feast the multitude were favoured by way of dessert with a plentiful application of the halberd and bâton.

"Thus," exclaims the Maréchal, "passes earthly glory, which ever deceives its votaries, especially when they undertake to do anything contrary to right and justice."

# BOOK II.

## BODILY SKILL.

### CHAPTER I.

#### RUNNERS AND RUNNING IN ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES.

Utility of Running in Ancient Times—The Swift-footed Achilles—How Running was esteemed—Different Kinds of Running—Greek and Roman Runners—The Pace—Opinion of the Ancients upon the Influence of the Exercise—The Endeavour to Abolish it—The Grand Turk's Runners, their Singular Accoutrement—The Abbé Nicquet—The Runner of the Polignacs.

In the earliest ages running was of the most marvellous use to man, for it was by means of it that he was enabled to capture some animals, and escape the attacks of others. In those days this was the only use to which men applied their swiftness, and when, at a later period, *war* took the place of the hunting of animals, and became the principal occupation of the human race, speed was again of the greatest importance in running down a weaker enemy, or escaping from a stronger. After the invention of arms of long range, agility became less necessary, and in our time victory no longer depends on suppleness of legs, for artillery mows down without mercy, as the reaper mows the ripe wheat. Achilles, with his swift feet, would in our day be but a pitiful personage, and though his speed might enable

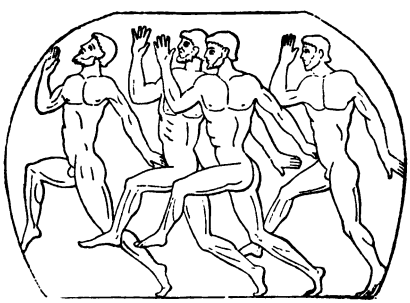
him to win a flat race at a country fair, as a soldier it would avail him nothing. He would be picked up and forwarded by the iron road to the theatre of his exploits, like a simple parcel; his swiftness would not enable him to escape the unseen bullet, and he would be as likely as the merest raw recruit to come back from the battle-field minus one of his boasted limbs, and pass the remainder of his days a pensioner on the bounty of the state.

On account of the uses to which formerly it could be put in time of war, running was regarded as one of the exercises most becoming a free man; it was cultivated in the gymnasiums; it had its place in the public games, especially at Olympus; and it formed the chief feature of all fêtes. It was with this exercise, regarded as the most noble, that all the solemn games commenced, wrestling holding the second place. It is likewise with this that Homer opens, when he describes the games of strength and skill; it is racing that fires the enthusiasm of Pindar. The art of running was held in equal honour by the historians, Thucydides, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Diodorus of Sicily, and Pausanias, who date events by Olympiads, and do not omit to add the name of the athletes who at these solemn celebrations bore away the prizes. Such was the antiquity and utility of the exercise, that victorious competitors in the other games were not received with the favour which was accorded to successful runners.

There were many varieties of foot-races, but as the distinctions between them consisted only in the different lengths of the courses traversed, it will suffice to speak particularly of but one variety. There was first that in which the competitors went once the length of the *stadium* or course, which at Olympia was six hundred feet; secondly,

there was a *diaulos*, or double course, in which the athletes, after having reached the goal, returned; thirdly, there was the *dolichos*, in regard to which opinion is much divided. According to some it was seven courses of the stadium, to others that it was twenty courses, which it is difficult to believe.

This last feat too frequently repeated resulted in the loss of life, as in the case of Ladas of Lacedæmonia, who fell



Ancient Foot Runners. (From a vase in the Berlin Museum.)

dead on arriving at the goal, after having run the *dolichos*. He attained such celebrity in this department of athletics that it was said of him, while language was still in its early exuberance, "his feet left no print on the sand." The Greek Anthology contains two epigrams concerning him. "Has Ladas started? Has Ladas flown across the course? He goes so quickly it is impossible to say." The other was relative to the statue of this athlete, the work of the famous sculptor Myron, of whom we have already spoken. "Such as thou wert, when darting forward, thou didst skim the earth with thy feet, such, O Ladas! still living, Myron has cast

thee in bronze, giving to thy whole body the life that thrills to the touch of the Olympic crown. The pulses of hope are beating in your lips, we see the heaving of your quick-breathing chest. Perhaps the bronze is about to throw itself forward toward the crown, the pedestal even will not hold it back."

Greece produced excellent runners, of whom the most highly esteemed came from the island of Crete. If it were necessary to enumerate all those who distinguished themselves in this exercise, a volume would not contain the names. But among the celebrities, the most famous beyond comparison were Hermogenes of Xanthos, in Lycia, who won eight wreaths in twelve years, and was known by the flattering surname of the "Horse;" Lasthenes, the Theban, who beat one of these quadrupeds in crossing the Choroneus at Thebes; and Polymnestor, the young goat-herd of Miletus, who caught a hare on foot, and who, in consequence of this feat, was sent by his master to the Olympic games. Alexander the Great had a runner, Philonides, who ran in nine hours the distance between Sicyon and Elis.

"The starting-place and the goal are the only points at which the young athlete allows himself to be seen, never in the course of his race," says a Greek poet, in singing the praises of a certain Arias of Tarsus, in Cilicia. The agility of the athlete could not be complimented in a more delicate and striking manner. And let us not forget the soldier who ran to announce the victory of Marathon, and, exhausted with fatigue, dropped dead at the feet of the magistrates of Athens as soon as he had signified the import of his message. Or that Euchidas of Platæa who came to find at Delphos the sacred fire necessary for the sacrifices, to replace that which the Persians had quenched; on the

same day, before the sinking of the sun, he had accomplished his mission and returned. He had walked one thousand stadia, but he expired as soon as he had accomplished his mission.

The Romans were not less distinguished in this respect than the Greeks. Pliny speaks of certain athletes of his time, who ran in the circus the distance of 160,000 paces;

Running with Arms. (From a cup in the Museum of Berlin.)

he mentions, also, a young man who ran 75,000. But the feats Pliny mentions are all the more astonishing, seeing that when Tiberius proceeded to Germany after his son Drusus, who was dying, he could not arrive at his destination in less than twenty-four hours, though the distance was only 200,000 paces, and the Emperor, as we are justified in supposing, did not travel afoot.

The runners, like all the other athletes, were naked; but there was a kind of race in which the competitors appeared armed, not from head to foot, but at least with helmet and shield. These racers were called *hoplitodromoi*

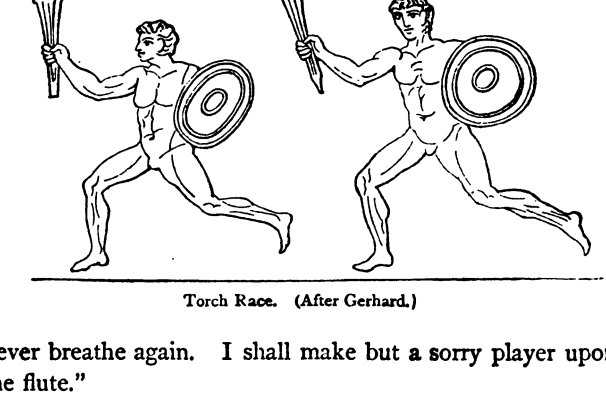
—heavy armed runners. Another variety of contest was the torch-race, which was run either on foot or on horseback, and consisted either in bearing the lighted torch throughout the entire race, and coming to the goal without having allowed it to go out, or in handing it lighted to a second runner, who in turn transferred it in the same state to a third, and so on.

Torch Race. (From a painted vase in the Hamilton collection.)

Xenophon remarks that athletes who devoted themselves to running were generally remarkable for their great limbs and their narrow shoulders, the opposite being the case with the wrestlers.

The racers of antiquity who purposed competing at the Olympic games, were extremely careful that nothing should interfere with the rapidity of their pace; and with this object they paid special attention to the condition of their spleen, believing that the unhealthy condition of that organ renders the whole body heavy and the breath short. When

any one on these occasions found himself less agile than usual, he attributed his lassitude at once to the bad condition of his spleen. Plautus, in one of his works, brings upon the scene a slothful servant, who accuses his spleen in order to excuse his laziness. "Ah, here is a racer whose limbs fail him!" cries he. "Heaven! I am lost. My spleen is disturbed, and swells up to my chest. I shall



Torch Race. (After Gerhard.)

never breathe again. I shall make but a sorry player upon the flute."

Some athletes, in order to be freed once for all of such a source of anxiety, sought to rid themselves altogether from an organ which caused so much trouble, and called medicine to their aid. Among the nostrums employed for this purpose were certain herbs, to which was attributed, rightly or wrongly, the power of dissolving the spleen. The only result of using these herbs was probably to diminish its size, by expelling humours which had grown in it. Pliny speaks of a plant, *equisetum*, a decoction of which the runners drank for three consecutive days. and after having been without

food for twenty-four hours. There were many other specifics for dispelling the impurities of the spleen, of which Cœlius Aurelianus, and Marcellus the empiric, speak; and the runners did not fail to apply to them.

Surgery offered other means, more efficacious but also more extreme, for the attainment of the athlete's object, viz., the removal of the organ by the knife or by fire. As to the former operation, ancient physicians do not say whether it ever proved successful; but if we may believe history, the removal of the spleen has been accomplished without sacrificing the life of the patient. The celebrated empiric Leonardo Fioravanti is said to have cured a young Greek suffering from tumour of the spleen at Palermo, in 1549, by cutting out the organ, which weighed several pounds.

The application of fire was a less dangerous practice. In the time of Hippocrates it was the custom to apply above the region of the spleen eight or ten dried mushrooms, which were then set on fire, and produced an equal number of sores. Others cauterised the same region with an instrument having three teeth, which were made red hot, and which burned right through the skin. Nevertheless all this does not prove that the ancients affected the actual substance of the spleen, and their writings furnish no information on the subject. But we have evidence which tends to show the probable success of this operation, in a statement by a German physician, Godfrey Mœbius, who lived in the seventeenth century. He had seen in the town of Halberstadt a courier in the service of Count Tilly, who attributed his surprising speed solely to the operation which a surgeon had performed upon him in the region of the spleen. According to this courier's account he was first put to sleep by means of a narcotic, and the operator having made an incision in his

side, then burned the spleen with a red-hot iron. Mœbius saw the cicatrice which still marked the seat of the wound. Five other individuals had been treated in the same manner, and at the same time as the courier, and only in one case did the operation result in the death of the patient.

It is believed that those who among the Turks adopt the profession of couriers are subjected to the fire rather than the knife treatment. Formerly the Grand Turk always maintained eighty or a hundred runners, who were named *peichs* (lackeys or footmen), and who were generally natives of Persia. The Persians were to him what the Basques were in France to the Grand Seigneurs before the Revolution—very willing and very swift messengers. The former ran on before their master when he travelled, and capered with wonderful agility without apparently finding it necessary to stop and take breath. To amuse the Sultan still more, as soon as the procession had reached the open country they returned to the side of the Grand Seigneur, and ran backwards before him, bowing their heads with, as the historians of the sixteenth century say, many antics and flourishes. All along the road they continually cried, *Allah Deicherin*—"God preserve the Sultan in power and in prosperity."

The ancient Turkish couriers always ran with bare feet, which were so hard and destitute of feeling, that they are said to have had themselves shod, like horses, with light iron shoes. To render the resemblance between them and horses more complete, they always carried in their mouths balls of silver, pierced with holes, and champed these as the quadruped does his bit. Further, their belts and garters were furnished with little bells, which tinkled very agreeably wherever they went. About the end of the sixteenth and in the seventeenth century, they ceased to

carry the balls of silver in their mouths, and began to wear coverings on their feet. Besides their pay, they received two complete suits of clothes every year. Their costume consisted of an Albanian cassock of damask of many colours or of striped satin, and a large belt of silk enriched with gold, in which they carried their poniard, the handle of which was of ivory and the sheath of the skin of some rare fish. They also wore very long stockings, like those generally used at the time by the Turks, as well as a rude kind of shoes. Upon their heads they had high bonnets covered with silver leaf, from which waved enormous plumes of ostrich feathers. In one hand each carried his damascened hatchet, with blade and hammer on opposite sides, and in the other hand a bag full of comfits, with which they kept their mouths moist while running. In this costume they everywhere accompanied the Grand Seigneur, or conveyed his messages as far as he pleased to send them. As soon as they had received their orders, away they went, leaping and capering among the crowd with the agility of deer, crying with all their might, "*Sauli, sauli!*" "take care, take care," and rushed on night and day with astonishing swiftness, taking no repose until they had delivered the message entrusted to them.

If they had more fatigue to undergo than their comrades the *vlachrars*, horse-couriers, they were not, like them, followed by the curses of the people along their route. Indeed, the latter, as soon as their animals were exhausted with fatigue, were allowed by government to lay hands on the first fresh horses they met, whether the property of Christian, Jew, or Turk. A vlachrar meeting a peasant mounted on a fresh animal, could compel him to dismount, and taking his place gallop away on his errand. As the poor countryman

was prohibited from removing the panting steed which the courier left behind, his only resource was to follow his spoiler on foot and try to make an arrangement with him for ready money. Often the courier urged on his horse till he broke down from sheer exhaustion, and then, having

**Peich, or Runner of the Grand Turk. Fifteenth Century.**
**(After B. de Vigenère.)**

exchanged him for the first fresh and stout animal he could see, mounted and rode off at full speed, followed by the wild and furious curses of the distracted proprietor. With a privilege such as this the messengers of the sultan might have been expected to traverse enormous distances; but they took their ease, travelling only during the day and reposing at night. They did not even journey with the speed of the couriers of other nations—the Abbé Nicquet, for example, the swiftest traveller of his time (the sixteenth century), who

reached Rome from Paris in six days four hours, although the distance was 350 leagues.

The Turkish foot-runners were swifter and more careful than the horsemen. They could go to and fro between Constantinople and Adrianople in two days and two nights, that is to say, at the rate of forty leagues, or about one hundred and twenty miles, in twenty-four hours. One of these runners made a bet that he would journey the distance from one to the other of these towns between two suns, in other words, in twenty-four hours, and accomplished the feat, though he had to contend against the enervating heats of the month of August.

## CHAPTER II.

### COURIERS OF THE ARISTOCRACY IN ENGLISH AND ELSEWHERE—MODERN COURIERS.

**Posting previously to 1789—Running like a Basque—The Lands of the Mountains and the Lands of the Plains—The Lackeys of other Days—English Runners—Runners of the Austrian Nobility—Flowers and Tinsel—The Zagal of Spain—The Aristocracy of Scotland—The Man-horse—The Duke of Queensberry and his Livery The Escort of the King of Saxony—A Runner on White Horses—Indefatigable Walkers—Captain Barclay and his Achievements.**

FORMERLY, as already hinted, the nobility maintained couriers, who not only carried messages for them into and from town, but also ran in front of the carriages when travelling, and rendered assistance in the difficult parts of the road. Prior to 1789 the postal service was not organised in the same excellent way as at the present time, for railways and macadamised roads were still unknown, and the superintendence of roads and bridges did not exist even in name. Those who had not couriers contented themselves with remaining at home without news; or if they did travel, they too often found themselves sticking fast in a rut, shouting for assistance, which did not come. Travelling was a luxury in which the rich indulged, in order to distinguish themselves from the less privileged classes. What facilitated the labour of the couriers was, that the roads being bad, the carriages advanced with difficulty, as a rule, at the rate of about five miles an hour. Nevertheless, everybody could

not indulge in this painful exercise, and good couriers were rare.

In France this office was most frequently filled by Basques, which has given rise to the proverbial expression, "To run like a Basque." In general mountaineers are swifter than the inhabitants of level countries. The quality is one which depends to a great extent upon the configuration of the land; and it is well known that Navarre and Biscay are hardly what can be called flat countries. The ancient Cretans were celebrated, as we have already said, for their swiftness in running; a fact which is not surprising, seeing that from their infancy they were accustomed to mountainous tracts, impracticable for horses or vehicles. The same difference is to be remarked among savage peoples, whose ability in running depends upon whether they dwell among hills or on the plains. Lescarbot, in vaunting the agility of the natives of Nouvelle-France, notices how those who are reared on the heights excel in swiftness their countrymen who inhabit the plains. The former, he says, breathe a purer and invigorating air, and live on better food; the latter cultivate low and unhealthy lands, with a thick, heavy atmosphere. He also mentions certain tribes on the coast of Malabar, who had acquired great celebrity for "twisting and turning their bodies in such an extraordinary fashion, that they seemed to have no bones;" and who were formidable opponents in a skirmish, their suppleness being such that they could advance and retire with the rapidity of lightning, giving their enemies no opportunity of injuring them. It is true that to arrive at such a degree of skill it was necessary to assist nature, and from the age of seven they paid special attention to their muscles, which they took care to rub continually with oil of sesamum.

The Basques also exercised their legs from an early age; and when grown up developed their running powers by assiduous practice. They were admirably adapted to act as couriers, as they did under the nobility of the *ancien régime.* In Rabelais, Grand-gousier despatched "the Basque, his lackey, to seek Gargantua in all haste." This proves that under Francis I., the natives of this country were employed in services which demanded the greatest bodily activity. "From the country of Béarn," says an author of the end of the sixteenth century, "come lackeys the best fitted for running that one could wish." The names of "lackey" and Basque were almost synonymous in the ancient French language, as well as in the usages of that state of society which disappeared at the Revolution; and the function of the lackey consisted specially in running in the service of the master of the household. Lower class people who wished to give themselves the airs of persons of quality, used to pretend to have a Basque in their service. It is to these that Henri Estienne alludes, when he says in his "Dialogues on the French Language," "And when you write in any place, even though it be but a little note, and you may not have an express porter, place the letter in the care of the first one you meet, and then you ought to say that you 'have despatched your Basque, who runs like the wind.'"

In England, as an aristocratic country, the services of these swift-footed officials were in great request. The qualities requisite were suppleness of body and robustness of constitution; and the runners were, like jockeys, obliged to take every precaution to maintain them. Their mode of living was in accordance with a severe regimen. In travelling they always carried a staff five or six feet in length, terminated by

a hollow ball of metal, generally of silver, which served at once as larder and cellar, for it contained their provender —hard boiled eggs and a little white wine. This courier's staff of the English gentry is without doubt the origin of the silver-headed canes which is the badge of office of certain domestics in great houses even in the present day.

The traditional costume of these running footmen consisted of a jacket like that of a jockey, breeches of white cloth, and a cap of silk or velvet. In a manuscript dated 1780, and quoted in *Notes and Queries*, is the following passage:—"The couriers drank white wine and ate hard eggs. I saw one some years ago. He had a little white wine in the large silver apple which terminated his long cane, and which could be opened. In mentioning his feats, he told me he had often run sixty miles a day, at the rate of seven miles an hour. Upon sloping ground he could keep in advance of a carriage with six horses, but on the level he had sometimes to make a sign with his *bâton* to the coachman to entreat him to pull up, and go at a slower pace." A good runner was indeed usually able to travel seven miles an hour when necessary; but in over-running himself thus, he was soon fatigued, and consequently was unable to do a long journey.

In Austria, at the court and among the nobles, it was also usual to keep domestics for the like purpose. An English lady, who ought to have been accustomed to the sight, on visiting Vienna about the end of the eighteenth century, could not restrain her indignation at what she considered a cruel system. "The unfortunate creatures," she says, "always run before the carriages of their masters, in the town and in the suburbs. It is with difficulty they can bear up for three or four years against such a life, and gene-

rally they die of consumption. Fatigue and sickness are depicted upon their thin and fleshless faces; yet, like victims prepared for sacrifice, they are crowned with flowers, and ornamented with tinsel of all kinds."

For such and other baubles and trifles, embroidery, lace, ruffles, fringes of gold and silver, and small bells that tinkled with a silver sound, all of them had a taste, and they adhered to them persistently. Racing suggests something light and graceful as the appropriate costume; it recalls to us the sylph or the butterfly—an animated flower, passing its life amid other flowers. If the reader has travelled in Spain he must remember the Zagal, who is a sort of coach conductor, and accompanies the diligences, to hurry on the relays, to watch the baggage, and render assistance in difficult parts of the road. He is an imp arrayed in cloth of blue, white, red, and orange stripes; and from the head to the feet is a mass of silk and velvet tufts, and buttons of filigree work; fantastic arabesques ornament the middle of his back, and his vest is maroon or tobacco-colour. The runners appertaining to the nobility in England and Germany were decked in similar finery, which on a young and lithe figure looked well enough. Unfortunately, however, Time—the most indefatigable of all runners—advanced upon them as upon all others, and it was a distressing spectacle to see men with grey heads tricked out in habiliments becoming enough during a youth that had long departed, and trying to contend with quadrupeds for the palm in running.

In Scotland, until the end of the eighteenth century, nothing was known of carriages with four wheels, and they used for travelling hired carriages, closed and mounted on two wheels, the body hanging, as it were, between the shafts. Gentlemen alone had carriages drawn by four or six horses, but as

vehicles frequently sank into the mire, owing to the dreadful state of the roads, it was necessary to have recourse to the help of the footmen, who, however, were employed specially to carry letters and despatches. In the districts surrounding many of the great Scottish houses one may to the present day still hear many a story told of the wonderful speed of these domestics. Thus, the Earl of Home, who resided at The Hirsel, in the county of Berwick, having important business which required immediate attention, entrusted the affair to his courier. Coming down from his bed-room next morning the earl perceived his man calmly sleeping upon a bench. Enraged at what seemed to be the wilful disobedience of his servant, the earl was about to have him punished, when it appeared that the courier had since the previous evening gone to Edinburgh, delivered his master's message, and returned while it was yet early morning. The distance between the two places is thirty-five miles. The Duke of Lauderdale, in the reign of Charles II., gave a great dinner at his castle of Thirlestane, near Lauder, but as the cloth was being laid it was discovered that an essential article was wanting. This was an annoying circumstance, all the more so as what was required was at another residence of the duke, Lethington Castle, fifteen miles off, near Haddington. A courier was, however, at once despatched, and was back again before dinner was over with the article mentioned, although he had to traverse a country broken up by hill and dale. We cannot help mentioning another case, that of a courier who was sent from Glasgow to Edinburgh in order to find a doctor, or rather, it should be said, two doctors, and accomplished his journey as if he travelled on wings. On his way he was asked how his master was, when, without stopping, he cried out as he ran, "My master is not yet dead, but he

soon will be, for he is to be assisted by no less than two doctors."

The name of this winged biped has not been preserved; but a certain Irishman in the service of Lord Henry Berkeley, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, has been more fortunate. Lady Berkeley having fallen ill at Collowdon, the family residence, she sent her courier, who was named Langham, with a letter to an old doctor in London. Langham returned, carrying in his hand a bottle which contained the medicine prescribed by the doctor. The courier had performed his journey of 148 miles in forty-two hours, although he was detained at night by the doctor, and afterwards by the apothecary. A horse could hardly have gone over the ground more rapidly.

In the "Letters from Italy," written in the eighteenth century, Beckford says, that being at Placentia in the spring of 1766, he sent his courier to Mantua. He did not set out before six in the morning, as the gates of the city did not open before that hour. The answer he brought was dated two hours after mid-day. He presented it next morning before Beckford rose, and yet made many excuses for not having returned on the day on which he set out. These men were capable of accomplishing prodigies; but it was cruel to put them to the test without sufficient cause. The distance between the two towns is sixty miles on the map, but the road is not at all straight.

The ambition of the runners of the English aristocracy was to beat the horse in speed. Many instances might be cited of their having wagered that they would beat a team of horses, and, however surprising it may seem, of their winning their bets. The Duke of Marlborough, in the eighteenth century, while driving a phæton drawn by four

horses, was beaten by a courier in the journey from London to Windsor; but the conqueror met the fate of some of his professional brethren of antiquity—he reached the goal, only to fall down never to rise again.

In proportion as communication became more easy, the roads more practicable, and the carriages lighter, the employment of couriers became less general. Sir Walter Scott had, however, the opportunity of seeing the carriage of Lord Hopetoun escorted by one of the old couriers, clothed in white and bearing a staff. The Duke of Queensberry, who died in 1810, maintained this custom longer than any other nobleman in London, and never engaged a courier until after he had seen him perform. He stood on his balcony in Piccadilly, and watched the competing couriers as, perspiring and bleeding, they ran past in the Queensberry livery, which they donned before starting. One day a candidate appeared who clothed himself and made ready to give a specimen of his ability. He proved, as he appeared to be, a fine runner, and, after putting him to a very severe trial, his grace said to him, "You will do very well, young man." "And your livery equally suits me," said the other, as, cutting a caper, he disappeared, never to return. The duke would have ordered a pursuit of this humorous courier, but he forbore, seeing well that the man ran better than all those in his employment.

Germany has not yet altogether renounced this ancient custom, for the King of Saxony maintained within the last few years a number of couriers. Imagine the astonishment of an English tourist, Mr. Lamont, when wandering about the gate of Dresden, he saw the King of Saxony, passing in a cloud of dust in a carriage drawn by four horses and preceded by couriers! In these modern times such a spectacle

could only awaken feelings of strong surprise, as at some fantastic pageant passing before him. In front of the carriage ran an old man, seventy years of age, six feet high, and as nimble as a stag. His costume recalled that of the couriers of the eighteenth century, the only difference being that it was more richly ornamented with embroidery, lace, &c. His bonnet was surmounted by two herons'

English Running Footman. (From an old Sign-board.)

feathers, and little bells hung from his leathern girdle. Near him ran his two sons, fine tall young men, dressed like their father. In the evening when the king feasted in public—as is the ridiculous custom in that country—the old man stood immediately behind his Majesty's chair, his position there being an indication of the esteem in which he was held by his royal master

To return to England, where, during the eighteenth century eccentricities flourished perhaps to a greater extent than in any other country of Europe, we find that a

vast amount of money was changing hands in bets upon the great runners and pedestrians of the day, whose limbs, indeed, seem to have walked off with quite as much as those of the ballet girls of the period. Great walkers were not less in vogue than swift runners, and among the most celebrated was Powell, born at Horsforth near Leeds, in 1734. His life was simply a succession of walking matches, and when his limbs refused their office any longer, he lay down, and died, April 1793. The apathetic Orientals, who spend more of their lives on their backs than upon their feet, say that happiness is horizontal; in the eyes of Powell it was vertical.

Captain Barclay, a great pedestrian, performed a number of most extraordinary walking feats. Descended from a family the members of which had long been renowned for their athletic achievements, he commenced his career at a very early age. In 1801, being then only twenty-two years of age, he set out from Ury, the residence of his parents, near Boroughbridge in Yorkshire, and in five days walked 300 miles, for a bet of 5,000 guineas. His most astonishing achievements, however, date from July, 1809. He betted £3,000 that he would walk 1,000 miles in 1,000 consecutive hours—a feat which many others had attempted and had failed. The money that depended on the result amounted to £100,000, and the athlete himself had £16,000 at issue. The bold captain started on his journey at midnight, June 1, from Newmarket, and on July 12, three hours after mid-day, he returned safe and sound.

The track was half a mile, marked from the house of the famous jockey, Buckle, where he put up, and along this he went backwards and forwards. A recent chronicler says:—"His dress throughout the match varied with the weather.

Sometimes he wore a flannel jacket, sometimes a loose dark grey coat, and walked in strong shoes and two pairs of coarse stockings, the outer pair being those known as boot stockings, without feet, to keep his legs dry. He paced along at a sort of lounging gait, without any apparent extraordinary exertion, scarcely raising his feet two inches above the ground.

"He breakfasted after returning from his walk at five A.M., when he ate a roast fowl and drank a pint of strong ale, then two cups of tea, with bread and butter. His luncheon hour was noon, when, on alternate days, he partook of mutton-chops and beefsteaks, and drank porter and two or three glasses of port wine. At six P.M. he dined on roast beef or mutton, and a small quantity of such vegetables as were to be had. Supper-time arrived with eleven o'clock, a cold fowl being his usual food. His four meals were always eaten with good relish, and it is computed that he consumed from five to six pounds of animal food per twenty-four hours. During the earlier days he often did not go to bed between the miles, but strolled about the streets of Newmarket, or reclined on a sofa in his resting apartment on the ground floor of the house.

"On the fourth day he was greatly incommoded by the dust, and on the tenth seemed fatigued, owing to the high wind and rain. He was, however, still in good health and spirits, and started as soon as called. On the twelfth day he rested often and slept well, but complained of pains in his neck and shoulders, caused by not wearing clothes enough during the night, and by sitting, when in a state of perspiration, with his back towards an open window. Up to this day his walking had been very regular, his longest mile having occupied but seventeen and a half minutes, and the

greatest time taken in covering the daily twenty-four miles being six hours and twenty-four and a half minutes.

"Early on the thirteenth day he was attacked by a soreness in the back tendons of his legs. Next morning it increased, and then went off, but reappeared the following day, and seized him almost every time he started. No remedy appears to have been applied, though one of the miles occupied twenty minutes.

"At noon on the sixteenth he removed to new lodgings near the "Horse and Jockey," and shifted his ground, walking across the Norwich Road up the heath and back. The change proved advantageous, as he felt more comfortable, and his food was not cooked in the house. After this time the pain in his legs and thighs impeded him at starting, but wore off after going three or four hundred yards. Curiously enough it was always worst about three A.M., and gradually decreased as the day advanced. On the nineteenth morning he had some difficulty in walking, and lay down frequently and slept. Still his appetite continued unimpaired, though his spirits were occasionally depressed. Next day his legs were bathed in vinegar, and, on the following morning, complaining of soreness in the tread of his right foot, vinegar was applied to that also. Rain had fallen nearly every day up to the twentieth, but from that time to the twenty-seventh the heat continued very great, and no moisture softened the path, which remained hard, notwithstanding that a water-cart went over the ground once a day.

"On the twenty-second Dr. Sandiver was called in, and recommended a warm bath, besides sending a liquid to be rubbed on the painful parts. Next day Captain Barclay was unfortunately attacked by toothache, and became

feverish and fretful, complaining often of his legs and feet. He felt much distressed through want of sleep, but on the twenty-fourth the toothache ceased, and after an hour's rest, he awoke much refreshed. Finding, however, that the warm bath made his feet tender, he ordered a flannel to be soaked in boiling water and wrung dry, then applied, but without permanent relief.

"On the twenty-sixth he was sometimes dressed and out before fully awake, and experienced difficulty in moving at starting. The flannel applications, however, began to effect some good, also the oil and camphor, which was rubbed on the painful parts. These remedies were, therefore, used night and day, and on the twenty-seventh the pain moved towards the ankles, causing him to suffer much and walk heavily. He was also very weak, and as the rain now began to fall in large quantities again, it became necessary that he should wear his great coat, which fatigued him so much, that at four A.M. the mile occupied thirty-six and a half minutes, his average per mile on the day having now increased to nineteen minutes and thirty-six and a quarter seconds, while the total time occupied by the twenty-four miles was seven hours and fifty and a half minutes.

"About this period it was reported that Captain Barclay's legs were swollen. The statement is denied on authority; they never swelled during the performance of the feat. On the twenty-ninth the pain in his calves increased, but he improved so surprisingly during the day, that no one who saw him had any idea of his debilitated state at night, whilst those who then accompanied him were equally deceived as to his appearance in the daytime. He was often so stiff in the morning that he could scarcely rise, and when up could hardly stand. On the thirty-second, whenever he rested, the

back tendons of his legs shrunk, and the pain was so excessive when they relaxed, that he could not get up without help. His courage, however, was unconquerable. Next morning it was some time after rising before he got the use of his limbs, and he appeared completely exhausted. The rain, too, was much against him, as his overcoat became soaked every time he went out. He now began to "shuffle" in his walk, and after resting on the thirty-fourth day, was compelled to cry out when moved. He however continued determined to complete the task at all risks, and notwithstanding that he grew weaker every hour, displayed remarkable resolution. One of the chief difficulties now was to manage his time, especially in the wet weather. He did not seem, on the thirty-eighth day, to relish his food as usual, and had become so much exhausted that when lifted up he could not stand without assistance. It became quite apparent that he could not have held out much longer, but the end was now drawing near, and he gained fresh courage.

"At length the finishing mile was entered upon at a quarter past three P.M., and completed, amidst the ringing cheers of his supporters, at thirty-seven minutes past three. He was then placed in a hot bath for a few minutes, well dried with flannels, and put to bed at four o'clock. He slept well until midnight, when he was awakened and had some water-gruel administered to him. Directly after he sank to sleep again, and arose at nine next morning, without pain, and in perfect health, so completely recovered, in fact, that four days afterwards he joined the Walcheren Expedition, and acted as aide-de-camp to the Marquis of Huntly. During the performance of his herculean feat Captain Barclay lost two stone four pounds in weight, but it left no ill effects afterwards. Altogether twelve days (of twenty-four hours

per diem) and eight hours were occupied in walking alone, so that the one thousand miles were covered at the rate of 81 miles and 142 yards per twenty-four hours. The average time for the miles during each week was:—

| | M. | S. | | M. | S. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| First | 14 | 54 | Fourth | 18 | 36 |
| Second | 16 | 0 | Fifth | 19 | 41 |
| Third | 16 | 41 | Sixth | 21 | 4 |

"The longest mile occupied 36½ minutes, the shortest 12 minutes; the longest 24 miles 8 hours 39½ minutes, and the shortest 5 hours 40 minutes.

"Several other persons afterwards attempted the 'Barclay feat,' but all failed. Mr. Howe started at Cliffe Common, Somerset, and gave up after fifteen days, his health being much impaired. Mr. Blackie walked on for twenty-three days, when, having lost three stone six pounds, he stopped. In May, 1812, Mr. Martingale made an attempt, but after thirty days was obliged to succumb, nature refusing to carry him any further. Of the numerous reported successes on running grounds of late years we take no heed. The pedestrians were never very carefully looked after, and, no doubt, though they paced the track diligently in open day, they took their proper rest at night, or during intervals when there were no lookers on."*

* London Society.

## CHAPTER III.

### RACES OF FEMALES.

Races of Shepherdesses in Wurtemberg—Atalanta.

If there is an exercise in which women can rival men, it is racing, for it requires chiefly suppleness and lightness, and for these qualities the other sex is distinguished. In several quarters of Germany races of females are held, and one of the most notable takes place on St. Bartholomew's Day at Markt-Gröningen in Wurtemburg. This is a little town which anciently belonged to the Counts of Gröningen, who were related to the reigning dynasty. Formerly a much-frequented market was held there on St. Bartholomew's Day. It is nothing now but a holiday gathering, enlivened by games, of which the most important is the country girls' race. They show the utmost interest in the contest, and in taking part in it have their feet entirely uncovered, and wear nothing on their bodies but a petticoat with a short boddice. They wait impatiently for the signal of starting, and as soon as it is given they spring forward with a bound, followed close—so close as to endanger their heels—by the town-clerk on horseback. What does this grave functionary do here? and why pursue so closely girls whose ardour requires no incentive? That is not his reason for spurring them on, mounted on his great Mecklenburgh horse, but to keep order, and put a stop to any dispute that may arise in this sport in which the *amour propre* of the women is so much engaged.

Each wishes of course to win the prize, and in endeavouring to obtain it all means are considered fair. One shoves her companion to make her fall, and will even roll upon the ground with her. Another strikes her neighbour in the side, that she may thus for a time stop the breath of a dangerous rival. These stratagems were strictly prohibited in the races of the ancients; for in those contests, whoever tried to stop his rival, or make him fall, by running against him, was excluded from the chance of winning, and was, indeed, branded with infamy. The country girls of Markt-Gröningen are not treated with equal rigour. They practise the same system of artifices in another kind of exercise, which is to the contest we are describing what the racing of the hoplitodromoi, or armed men, was to the ordinary racing in the Olympic games. In the case of the girls of Markt-Gröningen, however, no armour is carried; they are weighted not with a helmet, but with pitchers filled with water, which they keep in equilibrium by holding them with one hand. The great endeavour is to reach the goal without having spilled the water. But, alas! without suffering in the least from the jealousy of a rival, the slightest accident may prove fatal to the hopes of the fair candidate. She makes one false step, the pitcher trembles, she raises her hands to steady it, but it is too late; it falls, and the nymph is drenched from top to toe.

These young German girls, and all ladies who practise this sport, have an illustrious descent from the Atalanta of antiquity. Male runners have Mercury for their patron, but it is questionable whether they can be congratulated on their protector, that god not being in the odour of sanctity either on the earth or in Olympus; for he is accused of frequent acts of more than doubtful morality. Mercury's two

pretty little wings, attached to his heels, did not correspond to any mental delicacy, and his conscience was much more elastic than his limbs. The ladies can at least acknowledge Atalanta, of whom two impersonations figure in the ancient mythology, one belonging to Arcadia, the other to Bœotia. The more celebrated of the two, in coming into the world, was disowned by her father, who had desired a boy, and who, furious on this account, had her exposed pitilessly upon the lonely slopes of Mount Parthenius, beside a stream, at the entrance of a cave. The child was suckled—so runs the story—by a she-bear, and grew up in solitude in the midst of the forest, pursuing the swift deer and hunting the boar with the bow and javelin. She, among others, took part in the expedition against the wild boar of Calydon, and from the hide of the animal made a garment, which she wore all the rest of her life. All these tastes were certainly somewhat masculine, and it was perhaps this circumstance that brought about a reconciliation between her and her father. But what was he to make of such a daughter? Marry her as quick as possible, although the Delphic oracle had announced that Hymen would be unpropitious. As to the the selection of a husband, Atalanta made her own conditions, which were that she should give her hand only to the man who would catch her in a race, and that all others who should attempt the prize and fail should become her slaves. Milanion, among others, entered the lists, and the chase commenced. It is useless to say that Atalanta with flying feet kept ahead of her pursuers. Milanion laboured after her unsuccessfully, but as he was in the good graces of Venus, that goddess had made him a present of three apples, telling him to throw them upon the ground in front of his rival if she seemed likely to win. Atalanta, who

RACE OF WOMEN IN WURTEMBERG.

without doubt had never seen such beautiful fruit, stooped to pick up the apples, and allowed the protégé of Venus to take the lead. Thus, by means of his legs and the grace of the goddess, Milanion won the hand of Atalanta, by whom he had a son, Parthenopeus, who in his turn became an excellent runner. But some time after their marriage the young couple were changed into beasts, much, no doubt, to their surprise. What was their crime? Had they profaned the temple of Cybele? Or was it perhaps because they had been wanting in gratitude to Venus? The moral of the story is this: If you receive benefits never forget to thank those who bestowed them. Three apples, we may say, is no great affair; so be it; but their value is to be judged by the good gained by them. We thus see that the apple has played a prominent and disastrous part in the history of woman.

## CHAPTER IV.

### LEAPING AND LEAPERS IN ANTIQUITY.

Jumping as a Mechanical Evolution — Leaping among Animals — Among Insects — The Game of the Greased Leathern Bottle — A Professor in the Art of Leaping — Lamentations of an old Hindoo.

RACING, which was the subject of the two preceding chapters, is a complex act, essentially embodying in itself the process of leaping. We might even say that running is only composed of a succession of leaps, more or less rapid, and of greater or less extent. Leaping, properly so called, is a special movement, in which the body is for a brief space entirely detached from the ground, and remains an instant suspended, so to speak, in space, before it falls to the earth. It is the result of impulsive force acting in an upward direction throughout the whole system by the sudden extension of the lower members, the joints of which are first bent. At the moment at which a man is on the point of jumping upward, his feet touch the earth obliquely, and his legs are at a similar angle to his feet, his thighs to the lower part of the leg, and his trunk to the thighs. In this position, in which the action of the flexor muscles retains it, the body is considerably diminished in length, and its centre of gravity very much lowered. The muscles, however, cannot remain long in a position so contrary to nature, and when the tension ceases, the joints are suddenly straightened by the vigorous and quick action of the extensor

muscles which determine the force of projection that enables the body to spring up from the ground, and perform the desired movement, overcoming the resistance of the weight of the body. The "Encyclopædia" of Diderot and D'Alembert says, "That in order to calculate the force of all the muscles brought into play when a man resting upon his feet leaps up to the height of two feet or so, we ought to remember that he weighs 150 lbs., and that the forces necessary to raise the body to the height mentioned act with 2,000 times greater force, or with a force equivalent to 300,000 lbs.

But it is especially among animals that the study of the mechanism on which leaping depends is most interesting. The greater the length of the hind legs, the longer will be the leaps which the body is able to execute. It is thus that we are able to explain the prodigious and rapid jumps of the squirrel, the hare, and above all the jerboa. This last quadruped, whose hind extremities are very long, does not walk upon four feet, but carries on locomotion by jumping upon two. Nothing is more curious than to see him when he is suddenly surprised by the hunter in the midst of tall corn, over the ears of which he leaps, appearing and disappearing like a will-o'-the-wisp, the most accomplished pursuer experiencing great difficulty in catching him. In extremity he can get over ten feet at a single bound; and in his ordinary movements he traverses at least three or four feet at a leap. No animal is in this respect so highly gifted as the frog; and certain serpents also throw themselves forward to great distances. It is by an analogous movement that fishes, as the trout, salmon, &c., swimming in streams broken up by cataracts, are able to surmount all the obstacles they meet in ascending them.

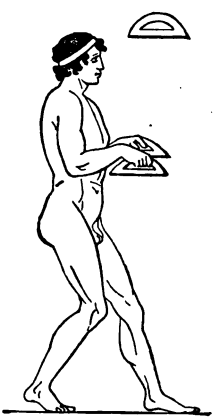
The whale jumps from fifteen to twenty feet out of the sea,

"after having," says Barthez, "struck the water with its tail so suddenly and so swiftly that it, seeming to be for the instant *fixed*, gives a support like a spring-board to the bound of this enormous animal. Nothing, however, among the larger species is equal to the wonderful power of insects, in which the muscles attain their maximum of force, verifying the saying of Pliny, that "Nature is greatest in little things." The grasshopper, for example, jumps two hundred times higher than the length of its body. Schwammerdam (1637—1680) remarks, in connection with this fact, that the legs of this insect are like high pillars between which the suspended body is at first balanced before being projected with all the more force by the action of the extensor muscles. And that other insect, which the Arabs call the *father of leaping*, is there anything more astonishing than the action of its muscles? The flea—if we must mention the lively insect—clears with a single leap a distance one hundred times the length of its own body, and can drag a weight twenty-four times as heavy as itself.

Man is not thus favoured, but there are some who appear to have received in certain measure the gift from bounteous nature. Among these was Phayllus, of Croton, who, if we are to believe history, could jump a distance of from fifty-four to fifty-six feet. The exercise was practised at the Olympic games, and formed part of the course of the Pentathlon.

The athletes who competed for this prize were naked, and used unguents more than all others. We may surmise, in spite of the silence of the ancient authors on the subject, that suppleness was a condition indispensable in this kind of exercise. The only things with which they burdened themselves were certain lumps of lead called *halteres*, which

they carried one in each hand. These varied in form with the times; for, while upon the remains of ancient vases and sculptured stones they appear pierced with an opening sufficiently large to allow of the hand passing through, in other cases they are furnished with a species of handle. However the form might change, their use was always the same, to give to the leaper more elasticity and strength, and to balance him in coming down on the ground. They were also beneficial in developing the strength of the arms and shoulders. Other athletes besides leapers—pugilists, for example—did not neglect to employ them, and many used them merely for healthy exercise. In the palæstra they were employed in all sorts of bodily exercises, but especially for leaping, of which there were several kinds, high leaps, long leaps, and leaps from a height downward. The athletes also practised jumping through hoops and over cords and naked swords. One variety of this exercise was the "game of the leathern bottle," which consisted of leaping either with the two feet or with only one upon a leather bottle or bladder inflated with air or filled with wine and covered with a coating of oil or grease. The difficulty in this case was not in making the leap, but in maintaining the footing upon the slippery surface of the bag.



Halteres used in Jumping. (From a vase in the Hamilton collection.)

This department of athletics was not held in high estimation, and consequently was not practised until the

more important competitions had taken place in running, wrestling, and pugilism. Homer makes no mention of it among the games of the Greeks under the walls of Troy, but it was in force among the Phocians, a frivolous race, fond of good living, dancing, and dress.

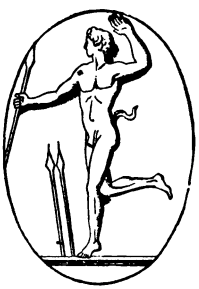
The most agile runners were always the best jumpers.

Leaping with Halteres. (From a Painted Vase—Gerhard.)

Thus Phayllus of Croton, who made the wonderful leap referred to above, was an indefatigable runner, and the Basques, who were also remarkable for swiftness in running, vaulted splendidly, either with or without the aid of poles. "He runs and leaps marvellously," was a frequent expression in ancient France in speaking of the Basque lackeys. The Spaniards are the cousins of the Basques, and partake of their tastes and capabilities; and Colonel Amoros, a great judge in these matters, puts the English in the same category. "An Englishman," said he, in his "Manual of

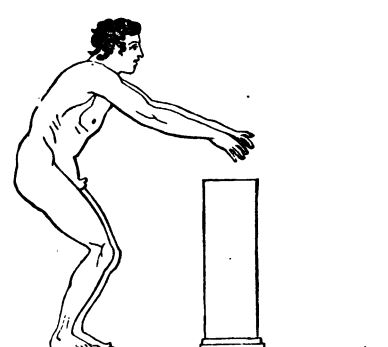
Physical Education" (Paris, 1830), "leapt the ditch of the garden of Mousseau, which is thirty feet wide, and we find

Leaping with Halteres.
(From a carving—Caylus.)



Leaping over Javelins.
(From a carving—Caylus.)

among this people as good long leapers as among the Spaniards. The best of my pupils did sixteen feet: and at

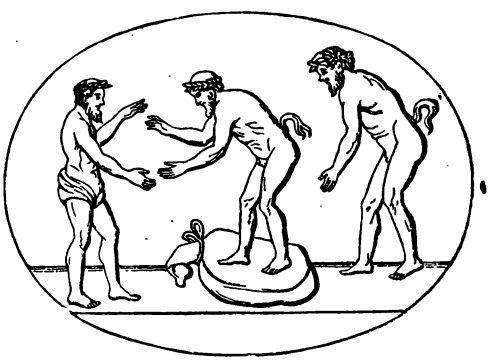


High Leap. (From a painted vase in the Hamilton collection.

Madrid a young lad of thirteen years leapt eighteen feet."

In the seventeenth century lived a clever Englishman,

William Stokes, who combined theory with practice, and who boasted that he had mastered the true principles of the art of leaping. These he expounded in a book originally published at Oxford, in 1652, called "The Vaulting Master." According to his method, a number of remarkable performers were trained; among others, a famous leaper, Simpson, who exhibited his powers at the fair of St. Bar-

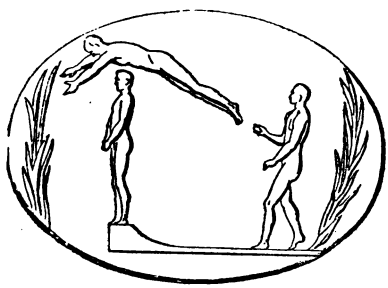


The Game of the Greased Bottle. (After Raponi.)

tholomew. Strutt, the author of a standard work on the games and amusements of the people of England, says that the most extraordinary jumper of whom he had any record was one named Ireland, of the county of York, who was eighteen years of age, six feet high, and of most prepossessing appearance. He leapt over nine horses ranged side by side, and over the man who was mounted upon the middle one. A cord, which was extended before him at the height of fourteen feet above the ground, he cleared with a single effort. With a furious bound he crushed with his foot a bladder suspended sixteen feet above the ground,

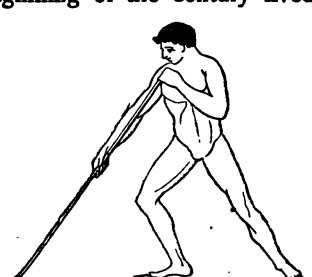
and on another occasion cleared a waggon, covered with an awning, with a simple leap.

If Strutt had travelled in India he would have seen



High Leap. (From an ancient carving.)

stranger things than those, for the Orientals are endowed with astonishing suppleness of joints. Colonel Ironside, who at the beginning of the century lived in India, and



Leaping with Pole. (From a vase.)

closely observed the feats of the jugglers, met in his travels an old white-bearded man, who, with one leap, sprung over the back of an enormous elephant, flanked by five or six

camels of the largest breed. The poor man, however, had not satisfied himself, and cried out bitterly that he had known the time when he performed in the presence of the King of Persia, and was able to boast that he was really a leaper. Old age and infirmities had reduced him, and deprived him of all his strength, and he had also since that time broken his arm and leg. What must have been the agility of this man in his youth, who in his old age was so vigorous? There is nothing more common in India than to see an athlete leaping over twenty people, whose extended arms form a sort of vault, or over a naked sword which a man holds as high in the air as possible. "The Tracts towards the History of Wonders performed at Fairs," Paris, 1745, mentions, as a marvellous feat, an Englishman's having, at the fair of Saint Germain, in 1724, leapt over forty people, without touching one of them!

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## CHAPTER V.

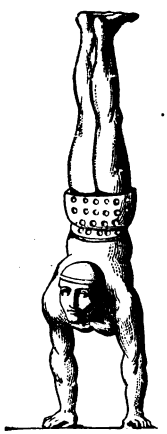
### ACROBATS IN ANTIQUITY.

**Acrobatic Feats in Homer — An Ancient Banquet — Feats with the Hoop—The Sword Dance—The Young Hippoclides of Athens—He misses a Splendid Marriage.**

LEAPING, though carried to extremes, was a natural and becoming exercise, which could without any impropriety be practised in public. This character entitled it to a place among the Olympic games and to the laurel crowns which were accorded to the winners. But besides classical leaping, there was another variety less natural, which among us is known as acrobatic tumbling, and is of very high antiquity. In the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" it is mentioned as having been practised at the fêtes celebrated at the palace of Menelaus the Lacedæmonian, in honour of the marriage of his daughter, when two tumblers went through their performances before the assembled nobles. Upon the shield of Achilles Vulcan represented tumblers who leapt and turned themselves upside down. These feats were chiefly performed at wedding and holiday rejoicings, and were generally accompanied by the music of the flute. Women did not hesitate to take part in them; and the gravest authors of antiquity have condescended to record the achievements of the female acrobats.

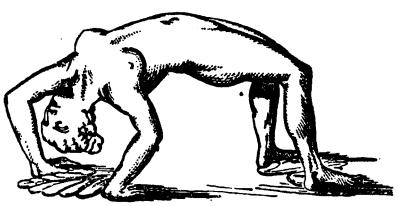
Gallus entertained a number of friends at his house at Piræa, on the occasion of a victory gained in the public games by a young man of his acquaintance. Meeting

Socrates, with a number of his disciples, he invited them to join his guests. A great banquet was never complete without the attendance of a flatterer and a buffoon, and accordingly a certain person named Philip soon appeared, who united in himself the two offices. The repast finished, the table cleared, the company poured their libations, and sang the customary hymn in honour of Apollo. The amusements then began; amongst the performers was a very able player upon the flute, and a female dancer whose feats of suppleness and tumbling were remarkable. The former commenced an air upon his instrument, while an attendant supplied the *danseuse* with about twenty hoops; these she took, and while dancing, threw them up into the air with such skill that in coming back to her hand they fell marking the time of the music. Socrates, to whom the slightest incident was matter for reflection, observed that "woman is an intelligent being, quick to learn and to imitate, and would be second to man in nothing but for the want of physical strength." Afterwards they brought her a wide hoop, in the rim of which naked swords, with their points directed inwards, were fastened. Through this the dancer made a number of somersaults, much to the alarm of the spectators, who feared that she would lacerate herself, but she acquitted herself in the most daring and successful manner without a single accident. A number of wonderful feats were then performed with a wheel, and when she had finished, Philip, the



Ancient Tumbler.

buffoon, attempted to imitate her, but in caricature, and always purposely taking the wrong way. "It appears to me," here objected Socrates, "that for tumblers to leap through a hoop mars the character of a gay and joyous festival, and, indeed, it is difficult to understand what pleasure there can be in witnessing such spectacles. Is it more amusing to see a handsome woman twirling and contorting herself in making backward tumbles than to see her calm and composed? When a couple of young performers dance to the sound of



Another Scene.

the flute, attired in the elegant costume of the Graces, the Seasons, or the Nymphs, well and good, the picture is a simple and a pleasing one."

Many of the feats and perilous leaps alluded to above are represented upon vases, sculptured stones, or other ancient relics which have been preserved to the present day. One represents a woman who walks upon her hands, while with one foot she seizes some vessel, and with the other ladles it into a cup, a second female regarding the spectacle with astonishment. Another tablet shows a woman throwing a somersault within a circle of swords fixed in the ground, their points directed upwards. In ancient times, however, a man moving in good society was not permitted to indulge in acrobatic feats, and young Hippoclides learned this fact

at very great expense, as may be seen from the following narrative, taken from Herodotus:—

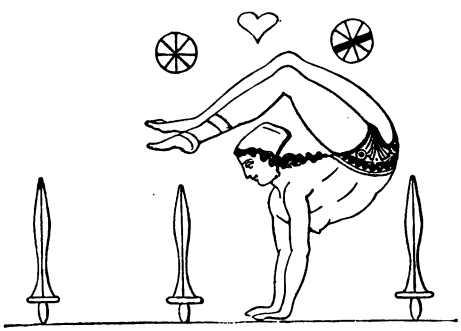
"Clisthenes, King of Sicyon, who had raised his family to the highest renown, had a daughter, named Agarista, whom he desired to see married to the most accomplished man in all Greece. At the Olympic games, after having carried away the prize for chariot racing, he caused his herald

Female Acrobats. (From an ancient vase.)

to make this proclamation: 'Whoever among the Greeks considers himself worthy to become the son-in-law of Clisthenes, has only to present himself at Sicyon within sixty days, or sooner, if more suitable. At the end of the year Clisthenes will name the man whom he prefers for his daughter's hand.' All the Greeks who thought themselves worthy set out for Sicyon as candidates. In order to put their valour to the proof, the king caused an arena to be prepared for wrestling and foot racing. Accordingly, they found themselves all gathered together on the appointed day. Clisthenes began by inquiring the country and the parentage of each, and afterwards kept them at his court for

a year, making himself acquainted with their manners and their abilities. He watched them separately and in company, and specially observed their conduct and bearing at table. Thus he lived all the time among them, entertaining them with the greatest munificence. Those who pleased him most were the Athenians, and especially Hippoclides, son of Tisander, who won his good-will, more on account of his valour than his noble lineage.

"The great day at length arrived, the solemn day on



Another Scene. (Ditto.)

which Clisthenes was to proclaim his choice, and the marriage take place. The King of Sicyon commenced by making a sacrifice of a hundred bullocks, and there was then a splendid feast, at which the candidates and the people of the town were regaled. At the end of the entertainment the young men competed for the palm of excellence in music and eloquence. Hippoclides was easily the victor in both arts, and after his success had been established, he made a sign to the flautist to play upon his instrument, and danced to the music with a highly self-satisfied air. Clisthenes, who observed him attentively, began to look

displeased. Hippoclides stopped for a few instants, then, calling for a table, he mounted upon it, and continued his dance, first after the Laconian fashion, afterwards in the antique style, and finally stood upon his head, gesticulating with his legs. During the first of these performances Clisthenes felt an aversion to this candidate for his daughter's hand springing up within him; but wishing to avoid a scene, he restrained himself. When, however, the youth stood on his head, with his legs in the air, he could contain himself no longer, and cried out, 'Son of Tisander, you have lost your wife by your dancing.' To which, in his turn, the youth replied, 'It's all the same to Hippoclides,' a saying which afterwards passed into a proverb.

"Silence was enforced, and Clisthenes said to the company: 'I pray you gentlemen who are here present in the hope of wedding my daughter believe that I hold you all as young men of great promise, and very willingly, if it were possible, I would gratify you all without choosing one to the disadvantage of the others. Having, however, only one daughter at my disposal, I cannot satisfy all of you, but in acknowledgment of the honour you have done me, and for your trouble in leaving your homes and journeying hither, I give to each of you a talent of silver. With respect to Megacles, son of Alcmæon, from this moment I betroth him to my daughter Agarista, to marry her according to the usages and customs of the Athenians.' Megacles accepted the conditions, and Clisthenes appointed a day for the wedding."

Tacitus, in his "Germania," speaks of young men of that country who danced naked among swords fixed in the earth, and crossed with their points upward.

We may wonder why the jugglers and other public per-

formers of the middle ages neglected to reproduce these feats invented in very ancient times, for the pictures in old MSS. would have guided them. The art of dancing, however, like all the others, declined during the dark ages, and though still practised, it was without rule or principle. It was with leaping as with the poetry of the period, which ran at random and without a plan. Restorers were earnestly demanded for both arts, and they came in the persons of Malherbe the littérateur, and Archangel Zuccaro the gymnast.

Zuccaro was the perfect type of those Italians, adroit, supple, thoroughly disciplined in all bodily exercises, who came to France in the sixteenth century, when the arts and the games of Italy began to be introduced at the French court. He was not, however, brought into France by one of those Italian princesses who carried with them the spirit of intrigue combined with a taste for balls and fêtes. He was indeed the servant of a princess, but of a German one, Elizabeth, daughter of the Emperor Maximilian, married to the king of France, Charles IX.

There were three things for which Archangel Zuccaro, who was born in the Abruzzi, thanked Heaven. They in no respect resembled those upon which a Greek of antiquity felicitated himself, who thanked the gods every day that he was a man and not a beast, a man and not a woman, a Greek and not a barbarian. It was Zuccaro's happiness, first, that he had served the Emperor Maximilian, "who, marrying his daughter Isabel to King Charles IX., commanded me to follow her, to see the beauty of this most noble country, in which I have ever since dwelt, being retained with the consent of my master the king, by her Majesty the queen, in order to be of use in those honest

exercises which she knows are in me, and thus to have had an honourable place in two Christian courts." The second consideration that made him thank Heaven was that he "had found the means of reducing the somersault under certain rules and measures which had never been accomplished before." And the third fact was that he had dedicated the book in which he sets forth his principles "to her very Christian Majesty of France." Zuccaro traces the history of this art back to the earliest ages of the world, puts the Bible in evidence upon the subject, and quotes Homer, Aristotle, Plato, and many others, especially himself, in support of his views.

The most curious part of his book is the information he gives us regarding Charles IX. "This magnanimous king, who will never be sufficiently praised, was desirous of practising perilous leaping, in respect of which I have the honour to be of use to his Majesty." The royal pupil acquired great expertness in all athletic exercises, and, according to his teacher, delighted to match himself with the best athletes, made running his study, handled his weapons creditably, even among the greatest masters of fencing, was passionately fond of tournaments as well as of the chase, and amused himself by taming the proudest, most intractable, or, as the professor says, the most cross-grained horses. Regarded from this point of view, the son of Catherine de Medicis falls naturally within the scope of our subject.

The example of the king, of course, induced all the nobles and gentry to pay great attention to feats of strength and agility, and Zuccaro mentions the fact in the beginning of his book, which opens like a romance of chivalry. Imagine a château situated in Touraine, a province "so

beautiful, so pleasant, and so fertile," says Zuccaro, "that it is considered the garden of France, as much for the mildness of its climate as for its abundant production of the things necessary for life, and varied with fertile plains, wide-extending forests, beautiful rivers, and spacious orchards." After the celebration of the royal nuptials, Charles IX., desirous of showing his states to his new queen, was travelling through this province with a numerous and brilliant suite. The beauty of the country and the pleasantness of the atmosphere tempted them to put up for some days chiefly at the Château du Boys, one of the mansions of the Seigneur du Fontaine. The nobility of the neighbourhood welcomed the royal party, whose principal amusements during their stay were hunting, running, and wrestling, which were here ardently pursued. Zuccaro, in his description of the scene, cannot refrain from indulging in the bombastic style of the time, to his own glorification. "While," he says, "some of the royal company passed the time with music, some danced, and some fenced with their weapons, one of the lords, coming forward, inquired for the great athlete. 'Where,' said he, 'is that prince of the most rare exercises of the age.' 'He is in his chamber,' answered one, 'arranging the architecture of some admirable leaps which he has invented!'" Eventually Zuccaro is discovered, and comes forward to instruct the gentlemen in the mysteries of the art of jumping. His *magnum opus* was very nearly lost amid the civil discords which disturbed the French capital, but after much labour the work was reconstructed, and the lost papers replaced by fresh copies. The book was not laid at the feet of Charles IX., the death of that monarch rendering the step impossible.

## CHAPTER VI.

### MODERN ACROBATS.

The Fair of St. Germain—A Fête at Chantilly under Louis XV.—The Somersault in England—The Dance executed by Herodias's Daughter—Editors and Gymnasts of the Middle Ages—The Summit of the Old Basilicas is Profaned—The Strasburg Cathedral—Goëthe and his Vertigo—A Faithful Dog—The Heiress of Gowrie.

THE Italians and the French are surely born to understand and appreciate each other; their natural nimbleness must establish between them a sort of family alliance. The Italians, who have always excelled in acrobatic feats, voluntarily select France as *par excellence* the theatre of their exploits. In the eighteenth century there was in Paris an Italian who equalled if he did not surpass Zuccaro. His name was Grimaldi, but he is better known under his sobriquet of Iron-leg. He first appeared about 1742, at the fair of St. Germain, and in a short time acquired the reputation of being the best leaper of his day. If his legs were iron, the springs of the machine were certainly of steel, for his elasticity was equal to his strength. He was aided in all his performances by a female, of whom, says M. Fournel, in his work upon the popular spectacle of Paris, no one knows in what relationship she stood to him. He wagered that in his entertainment of *The Prize of Cythera* he would jump as high as the chandeliers, and so well did he keep his word that with a blow he knocked off a portion of one of

them, which fell at the feet of Mahomet Effendi, the Turkish ambassador, who was sitting in the king's box. When the performance was finished, Grimaldi presented himself before his Excellency, expecting a reward for his skill, but he was received with the greatest hauteur by the ambassador's servants, who informed him in the severest manner that instead of a reward he deserved punishment. The Turks never could appreciate the fine arts!

Before the time of Iron-leg, Crepin had appeared, who, for a lame person, was wonderfully nimble. He had been preceded by a Basque named Du Broc, who was the first to execute the spring-board leap, holding a flaming torch in each hand.

The rendezvous of all professional leapers was the fair of St. Germain, the centre of trade and pleasure, where, during two months and a half—the duration of the fair in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—the Parisians congregated in great multitudes. At first the fair lasted only for a fortnight, but little by little it encroached upon the carnival, then upon Lent, and at the same time came to include the whole superficial area now bounded by the Fours, Boucheries, the Quatre-Vents, and Tournon streets. It was here that the great athletic celebrities formed their style, and from this nursery went forth the acrobats who made such a prominent figure at the fête given to Louis XV. by the Duke of Bourbon in his magnificent domain of Chantilly, from the 4th to the 8th of November, 1722. The young prince first visited the park, and admired the menagerie, and as he left, Orpheus appeared before him in the midst of a grotto surrounded by oleanders and orange trees. The part of Orpheus was filled by a fiddler in the opera, whose enchanting strains had a visible effect upon the animals which the king had just

inspected. At the sound of the violin the beasts, as well they might, stood stock still, but when the French Orpheus played variations, which included the sounds of hunting horns and the baying and barking of hounds, *sauve qui peut* was the word in the menagerie. The bears climbed to the summits of the trees, threw themselves upon the tight ropes that had been extended, and performed endless feats of suppleness and dexterity; while the other animals, the monkeys, lions, and tigers, showed the greatest excitement, leaping and bounding about with all that savage alertness which they manifest in their native wilds when pursued by the huntsman, or when capturing their prey. The most wonderful feat, however, which these denizens of the woods and wildernesses performed was their coming all together in a row and making a profound obeisance to the king! It then for the first time became apparent to all that those wild beasts were only a troupe of the best rope-dancers and vaulters from the fair of St. Germain, dressed, painted, and otherwise "made up" for the entertainment of the prince.

The English cultivated with equal success the art of tumbling, and they were especially great in the acrobatic leap, called the somerset. It is said that this word dates from the seventeenth century, from the reign of James I., whose great favourite was Robert Carr, Duke of Somerset, who was highly accomplished in this exercise. But *somerset* is a corruption of *somersault*, which itself is an altered form of the word *soubresault*, in its turn derived from the Italian *sopraselto*. In reality the origin of this species of leaping in England was of a much more ancient date. Jugglers performed this feat in order to amuse the Saxon princes and the Norman kings; they travelled the country, stopping at

the great houses and giving entertainments, and sometimes executed their displays of skill on horseback.

We read in ancient chronicles that one day Edward II. (fourteenth century), deriving great entertainment from seeing one of these mountebanks, who ran before him, and in throwing his somersaults frequently leapt over a horse's back, gave the tumbler twenty shillings, a large sum for the time, and very likely more than the performance was worth.

The decided taste of the English nobility for such exercises has been the cause of a very singular mistake. In the engravings of ancient manuscripts (of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) we see Salome, the daughter of Herodias, throwing a somersault before Herod, to obtain a boon of the king, the boon being the head of John the Baptist. But why the somersault? we wish to know. There is no mention of it in sacred writ, which simply says *she danced*, without any accompaniment of somersaults. The translators of the Gospel in the middle ages did not believe that this fatal dance was in itself such an innocent affair, for it seemed to them monstrous that as a reward for two or three capers Herod should have delivered up the head of John the Baptist. To obtain such a reward it was natural to suppose that Salome performed some extraordinary acrobatic feats, marvels of tumbling, and wonders of strength. Thus, without having regard to historic accuracy, but led away by a feeling in itself commendable, the translators and commentators speak of the girl as a common mountebank, like those whom in their own day they constantly saw performing at fairs and fêtes—as one of those women light equally in their heels and their morals, who imitated or rivalled the daring somersaults of the men to whose troupe they were attached. Had the mistake recorded been made

only on paper it would have been lost sight of in time, but in the middle ages men engraved their thoughts on their cathedrals and sculptured them on their monuments. They could only conceive the daughter of Herodias in a grotesque and extravagant posture, and at the present day carvings are to be seen in many cathedrals representing her dancing on her hands and head, with her legs in the air.

Acrobatic feats were the fashion in the time of Henry VIII., who was much amused by them, and paid heavy sums to the professors of the art. At the coronation of Queen Mary, his daughter, who inherited his tastes, a Hollander named Peter executed feats of agility under the summit of St. Pauls, and also performed on the tight rope in the theatres. He displayed his skill under the vane of the steeple, sustaining himself sometimes upon one foot and sometimes on his knees, brandishing at the same time a huge flag which waved in the wind. The flag had a very fine effect, but it was otherwise with the torches, with which he also performed, for they refused to burn when wanted. For his skill, and as something to pay the expenses of his aerial establishment, he received, according to Holinshed's chronicle, the sum of £16 13s. 4d.

It was a singular idea to choose the summit of an imposing and venerable church as the scene of such fantastic tricks. It is, however, often the case that cathedral spires attract the lightning, and when damage is done, can only be repaired by men who have the perfect self-possession and skill which ground and lofty tumbling demands and develops. From the square of Strasbourg, in the early days of April, 1860, one might have witnessed an unprecedented spectacle—that of a human form struggling and swaying at the summit of the steeple. The form at that distance looked

not larger than a mere speck, and its motions were only to be distinguished by the aid of an opera-glass. The climber —surely possessed of some evil spirit—was a young soldier, for whom lofty eminences had a special attraction, and who loved his cathedral of Strasbourg as much as Quasimodo loved the towers of Notre-Dame in Paris. He mounted up to the steeple as soon as he had a moment of liberty, and remained as long as he chose, for military discipline has little terror at 142 mètres above the level of the sea, the elevation at which this soldier indulged in his awful amusement.

One particular day the wind blew with a violence which gave one some idea of what must be its force in the higher regions, and especially round the spire. There it was not merely a gale but a hurricane, and the spectator shuddered to see the clothes of this daring climber blown about by the squall. In order to arrive at what is known as the platform, it is only necessary to have good legs and strong limbs, but above that point, one feels so much carried away by the air that surrounds him, that the greater number of strangers cease their ascent at the platform. Enthusiasts, however, with good lungs and strong limbs, work their way into the four turrets leading to the base of that octagonal pyramid, so bold and light in design, which really constitutes the spire. Those who are not over stout, and who do not fear dizziness, may clamber up still further by ladders to the lantern. Goëthe accomplished this ascent more than once, for the purpose of getting rid of a constitutional tendency to vertigo, and carved his name upon the stone walls of the turrets, but time has already worn away some of the letters.

It is with difficulty that one passes the *crown*, and with still more that other architectural wonder the *rose*. Here the spire appears like a needle crossed with horizontal bars,

the arrangement forming a sort of cross. This part being passed, there is, in the absence of cross bars of metal or projecting corners of stone, but little support for the adventurous climber, who is compelled to creep up by his hands and feet. Finally, the spire terminates in a *button* which is less than a foot and a half in diameter. Formerly it served as a pedestal for a statue of the Virgin, but it is now merely the end of the lightning conductor that terminates the edifice. But it was here, upon this button, at the height of 466 feet above the level of the cathedral square, that the soldier used to take his gymnastic exercise. The people assembled in the cathedral close watched him with the most painful excitement, holding their breath, and trembling with horror, while the man at the time was standing on his head on the button, his legs in the air, announcing to the two banks of the Rhine, to France and Germany, that his feat was successfully acccomplished.

This was not the first time, however, that it had been done; for in the eighteenth century, according to the chronicle of the cathedral, a German chimney-sweeper climbed up to the button, and stood upright upon it. At that time there was no lightning rod running up at the sides, and the attempt was considered a most daring one. Rose-Marie Varnhagen, a romance writer, has made the event the crowning incident of a very excellent novel. On the day of the inauguration of the Strasbourg Railway, the feat was repeated, and in this instance the amateur saluted from his lofty perch the balloon which was set off in honour of the occasion, and which passed quite close to him.

In earlier times a gentleman made a bet that he would walk round the balustrade of the platform, at which, as we said, all prudent persons with ordinary heads will first rest a

short time, and then retrace their steps. To walk on the *parapet* of the platform at this dizzy height was a terrible undertaking. The man, who was accompanied by a faithful dog, proceeded on his march, but being suddenly seized with giddiness he made a false step. His dog, faithful to him in death, sprang after him; and in memory of this act of devotion, the image of the generous animal is carved on one of the sides of the monument which the friends of the foolhardy man erected to his memory. Further, we read of a young man of a good family in Strasbourg, who indulged in similar dangerous diversions. He tied his feet together, and thus fettered, and helpless in case of accident, amused himself by leaping from the platform up to the parapet, at the imminent risk of being precipitated head foremost upon the pavement below.

"Love laughs at locksmiths," and Love never laughed more heartily at them than in the case of the daughter of the Earl of Gowrie, whose castle was in the north of Scotland. The Earl had made a young man prisoner, and held him in bondage in a tower which stood isolated by a space of about ten feet from the main buildings of the castle. The young lady regarded the prisoner, whom she saw daily at the barred window of his chamber, with that compassionate sympathy, which, on Dryden's authority, "melts from pity into love." An intimacy soon sprang up between the youthful pair, messages were exchanged, and in the course of time there were frequent interviews—the young lady obtaining access to the tower through the help of the old Highlander who kept the keys. One evening, before the castle-gates were closed, she contrived to glide round to the tower. The old nurse, who had not been taken into confidence, observed her, and went at once to betray

the love affair, which, had she only been consulted about it, she would have been but too happy to promote. The Countess of Gowrie at once went in search of her daughter. The young lady, who received timely warning of her mother's approach, would certainly have been caught had she attempted to return by the usual way. It was now evening also, and all the back entrances were locked and guarded. There was only one course open to her. She mounted up to the summit of the tower, and from its battlement made the splendid leap of nine feet four inches across the space which divided the tower from the castle, and landed safely within the main building. She at once repaired to her room, and lay down on her bed to await the event. Meanwhile, her mother, after searching all over the tower and the castle, came to her daughter's sleeping room, and found her peacefully reclining on her pillow. The young lady was of course astonished at a visit at that untimely hour; and the Countess was overcome with confusion for having for a moment entertained unwarrantable suspicions. The "Maiden's Leap," as it is called to the present day, was over a space sixty feet deep. It may be added that at their next interview, the lovers decided that the leap was too dangerous to be repeated, and that their only resource was to run away together—which second feat was achieved with success equal to that which attended the first.

## CHAPTER VII.

### ROPE DANCERS IN ANCIENT TIMES AND IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

Fêtes of Bacchus—Varieties of Rope Dancing—The most accomplished Dancers—The Caracalla Medal—Terence—Elephants on the Tight Rope—Rope Dancers of the Lower Empire—The *Voleur* under Charles V.—The Genoese in the time of Charles VI.—Progresses of Sovereigns—Dancers at Venice.

JUMPING depends not merely on suppleness; it is necessary that the ground on which the leaper stands should furnish a sufficient support, for without this the projection which is the result of the sudden extension of the lower members could not take place, or at least its effect would be much weakened. Leaping, then, demands a sufficient basis; upon shifting sand it is impossible, while on the other hand, if the material be elastic, the reaction caused by the effort of jumping favours the movement of projection, as for instance, when a leap is taken from a spring-board. The same is the result when it is taken from a tight-rope. Evolutions on the tight-rope have been performed from the very earliest times, and their origin is hidden in the darkness of ages of which we have no record. Some historians refer us to the times immediately succeeding the Deluge for the commencement of this practice, but we content ourselves with the first mention of it among the Greeks. We read of rope-dancing shortly after the time of the institution of the feasts of Bacchus (B.C. 1345).

The numerous terms which their language possessed to designate the dancers on ropes proves that they were acquainted with several varieties of them. Some, suspended by the feet, threw themselves over the rope as a wheel round its axis. Others leaning on it with the stomach, the arms and legs extended in the air, slid down from an elevation with the rapidity of an arrow. Some ran upon a rope stretched obliquely. Others, walking upon a horizontal cord, leapt and threw somersaults from it with as much confidence as if they had been on the ground. They kept themselves in their place, sometimes with and sometimes without a balancing pole, and the rope was either slack or tight.

Rope Dancers.
(From an ancient medal.)

Among the nations of antiquity, the Cyzicenians, inhabitants of Cyzicos in Asia Minor, are mentioned as the most able schœnobates, or rope-walkers. Spon, the antiquary, has described one of their medals struck in honour of Caracalla, representing on one side the head of that emperor, and on the other men, standing upright upon obliquely stretched ropes, whom that archæologist believes to be rope-dancers. His opinion is confirmed by a passage in an old geographer, who says that, "This people and their neighbours were so adroit in leaping and dancing on the rope, that they surpassed in this game all the other nations, and boasted themselves the inventors and the first masters of the art."

Caracalla appears therefore to have taken pleasure in these

exercises, or at least in looking at them, for without doubt the people referred to, in presenting him with this medal, meant to flatter his tastes. In fact, the Romans were enthusiastic about this sport, which dates, according to them, from the introduction of the scenic games, 390 years from the founding of Rome. Among them it was practised at first in the open air, but afterwards chiefly in the theatres. Rope-dancing became one of the favourite amusements of

Rope Dancer. (From a picture at Herculaneum.)

the imperial people, who, for this spectacle, neglected more — noble accomplishments. We know the mishap of the comic poet Terence. The *Hecyra* was about to be represented, when the news being spread that the rope-dancers had come, the spectators immediately left the theatre *en masse*, preferring the grosser exhibition to the representation of character and passion.

At Rome the rope-dancers varied their exercises in a hundred different ways, as is shown in the series of pictures found at Herculaneum, which represent Bacchantes, dances

of satyrs, and many other scenes. The performers bear the *thyrsus* or Bacchic staff, which served them in place of a balance, and wear caps of hide, no doubt as a protection to their heads in case of accident. It was the philosophic emperor, Marcus Aurelius, who, having witnessed the fall of a child from the tight-rope, ordained that mattresses should thereafter be placed beneath. At a later period cords were stretched under the dancers, a custom which, as the Latin authors inform us, was continued down to the age of Diocletian.

The Romans, not content with the exhibition of men on the tight rope, instructed animals in the art. Under Tiberius a special kind of spectacle took place at the Floral games, elephants walking on the tight-rope. During the reign of Nero a Roman horseman, mounting one of these, drove him without mishap over this flexible roadway. Pliny speaks of gladiatorial combats at which appeared "elephants which performed a number of astonishing tricks, throwing swords in the air, fighting among themselves like the gladiators, dancing the Pyrrhic dance, and walking on the tight-rope." They also, the same author informs us, came down backwards.

As time advanced, the heads of the Church strongly protested against such a dangerous custom. According to the Christian doctrine the life of a man, however infamous, is too valuable to be exposed to useless risk. The time was past when the circus was drenched with the blood of gladiators for the gratification of the idlers in the galleries. At the period we speak of there were no mattresses ranged along the course of the cord to break the dancer's fall; the ropes were extended at unheard of heights, and in a sloping form. "It was impossible to stand upon them," says

St. Chrysostom, "the performers must either ascend or descend." One ill-directed glance, the slightest lapse of attention, and the acrobat was precipitated into the orchestra. The dancers who performed before the Greeks of the Lower Empire were most skilful. "Some," adds the pious author, "after having walked along the rope, took off their clothes and put them on again while on this slender footing, as if they were in their bed-rooms, a spectacle which

Rope Dancer. (From a picture at Herculaneum.)

many did not dare to look at, and which others could only behold with fear and trembling."

At the breaking up of the Roman power rope-dancing was not discontinued, and the historian finds it flourishing among the Franks at the great markets and fairs, which were then almost the only occasions of people assembling in large numbers. Those who practised the art always came in the troupe of one who exhibited wild beasts, or of some charlatan who vended drugs. In the time of St. Louis we remark that a certain minstrel made a perilous ascent; and later,

under Charles V., there was at Paris a man whose ability was such that he performed tumbling feats, threw somersaults in the air, and did many other things which had been deemed impossible. He stretched very slender cords from the towers of Notre-Dame to the palace, and even further, and from these leapt and tumbled with such boldness and rapidity that he seemed to fly—hence the name he received of Voleur, or flyer. It is the learned Christine of Pisa who narrates these facts in her "Book of Deeds and Good Manners of the Wise King Charles." She went, like all the Parisians of the day, to see this gymnast, and affirms, as we all do when we witness an extraordinary spectacle, ignorant of what may yet be accomplished, and forgetting the marvellous feats of the past, "that there never could be the equal of this man in his profession." "He performed thus many times before the court," continues the lady, "and when the king heard some time after that this Voleur had fallen from the cords, and was bruised to death, 'Certes,' said he, 'it was impossible that a man who presumed so much upon his skill, his lightness, and his experience, should not have a misfortune in the end.'" When Isabel of Bavaria, the young wife of the successor of this monarch, Charles VI., made her solemn entrance into Paris, important fêtes were arranged for her reception, among which were the astonishing feats of a Genoese rope-dancer. About a month before the arrival of the queen this "ingenious inventor" had stretched a rope from the great tower of Notre-Dame to the bridge of St. Michael. "This rope," says Froissart, who describes all these fêtes in his usual minute style, "reached high above the houses. When the queen and her ladies passed into the great street of Notre-Dame the Genoese set out from the scaffolding, and, singing as he proceeded, walked all the

length of the street through which the cortége passed; and when the darkness came down he took in each hand a lighted torch, which he brandished as he went. Men and women," says the old chronicler, "marvelled how he could do it; and the gymnast, always carrying the flaming torches, which could be seen from every part of Paris, and from the distance of three leagues beyond the walls, performed such feats of every kind, that he and his agility were much praised."

According to the "Chronicles of St. Denis," the rope was extended between Notre-Dame and the Pont du Change. It was hung with blue taffeta, ornamented with gold *fleurs de lis*, and "upon it was a man very light and agile, in the guise of an angel," who came from the towers of Notre-Dame straight to the bridge, and then entered at the hour when the queen passed, and appearing before her put a beautiful crown upon his head!

These entertainments came to be the fashion in connection with the entrances of monarchs into cities. Edward VI. of England, passing through London to be crowned, stopped before St. Pauls churchyard, where, according to the "Archæologia Britannica," a rope as thick as the cable of a ship was stretched from the turrets of St. Pauls, and kept fastened by an anchor at its extremity. As the king approached, a foreigner, a native of Aragon, descended the rope—on his stomach, head foremost, his arms and legs being extended in the air—with the speed of an arrow shot from a bow, from the turrets to the ground. When he raised himself up, he advanced towards the king, bent his knee, and after speaking a few words, took his leave. He then ascended his rope to over the middle of the churchyard, where he performed some wonderful leaps and gam-

bols, with a cord which he had round him. Having taken it in his hand, he fastened it to the cable, attached himself to it by the right leg, and remained hanging in this fashion, until getting upon the cable again, he undid the knots, and descended.

This performance was repeated, perhaps by the same person, during the following reign; for, according to Holinshed, among the entertainments given in London at the reception of Philip of Spain, husband of Queen Mary, a man descended, head foremost, upon a rope attached to one of the turrets of St. Pauls, not holding on by either his hands or his feet; but it is added that the feat afterwards cost him his life.

In France, the provinces were, in regard to these performances, not far behind the capital. Jehan d'Authon, that grave chronicler who followed Louis XII. in all his travels, has not scorned to transmit to posterity the name of a young performer of promise, George Menustre, who attempted the wildest flights in his gymnastics. At Macon, when performing on a rope placed between the great tower of the castle and the clock tower of the Jacobins, he hung suspended by the feet, and afterwards by the teeth, 160 feet above the ground. An earlier historian had already told of a marvellous performance by a Portuguese at Milan before the ambassadors of Charles VII. of France.

Each nation preferred foreigners for acrobatic feats. The Londoners, for example, chose a native of Aragon, the Parisians a Genoese, and the Italians a Portuguese. These last were, however, so rich in their own supply of artists, and so naturally agile themselves, that they had no need of acrobats from abroad. Venice had its rope-dancers, who regularly performed their feats on the day of the feast

ROPE DANCER AT VENICE.

(From a picture of the Period.)

of St. Mark, the patron of the town, in presence of the doge, the senate, and the foreign ambassadors. During the time of the carnival similar performances took place, but here the real merit of rope dancing was not always apparent, for the performers were often sustained by artificial means.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ROPE DANCERS IN MODERN TIMES.

Decline and Revival of Rope Dancing—Turks in Favour—Hall, the Favourite at Charles II.'s Court—Competitions of Artists under Louis XIV.—Dancers at the Fair of St. Germain—Nicolet—The Empire — America — Bell-ringers of Seville — The Natives of Tahiti.

WHILE Italy was producing these artists, in France rope dancing had become debased and degraded—a fortunate result due no doubt to the great movement of the Renaissance. During the re-awakening of thought in the reaction against the rudeness and the coarse pleasures of the middle ages, mountebanks and jugglers were not held in high esteem; and the supremacy of mind succeeded to the worship of matter. In the reign of Henri II., however, a clever Turk made his appearance, and won applause by his performance with a basin upon two ropes, the one extended beneath the other so as to permit of his passing between them, executing marvellous feats the while. Sauval is the authority who speaks of this dancer, drawing upon the records of the historian of the time, who professes great admiration for the performance. Whatever his merits, is it necessary to agree with M. Fournel, who, with a solemnity that is very comical, says, "This Turk was one of the restorers of the *haute école*, and we partly owe to him that revival of the tight rope which was contemporaneous with the renaissance of letters?"

We notice that from this time many Turks appeared at public shows in France, Italy, and England. The Turks were then regarded as bugbears in Europe, and were held in such detestation that the popes launched anathemas and preached up holy wars against them. A Turk was in himself a curiosity, but if he was also a tight-rope dancer, and thus a curiosity in a double sense, he was all the more certain to "draw." For this reason the purveyors of public spectacles made no scruple at this time of producing jugglers who were Turks only in appearance, just as later managers have produced savages who never saw any wilderness more uncommon than an Irish bog, and *troupes* of (City) Arabs much less unsophisticated than the simpletons who came to stare at them.

Was that a Turk of pure blood whom Bonnet mentions in his "Histoire de la Danse?" Bonnet saw him at Naples dancing on a rope extended across a wide street from the windows of the fifth floor, and using no balance-pole or counter-weights, though he had mattresses spread on the street beneath the whole range of the cord. Another Turk is mentioned whom the same author saw at the fair of St. Germain at the end of the seventeenth century, and who proved himself a most accomplished acrobat, performing wonders as a high leaper. He lost his life at the fair of Troyes, where one of his companions, an Englishman, also a famous dancer, greased the oblique rope upon which the Turk had to descend backwards preserving an upright attitude. Of course the fall was at once fatal. "It is common," adds Bonnet, gravely, "to witness similar plots, the results of envy against those who excel in the arts. History, especially in connection with painting and sculpture, furnishes us with many examples

The eminence of the Turks as performers upon the rope remained for a long time undiminished. In London, in the reign of George II., a follower of the Prophet, ostensibly at least, did many marvels—such as juggling with oranges, without the assistance of a pole; but Strutt, the great English authority on such matters, says that the enthusiasm which he aroused was much diminished when, one of the oranges having fallen, it was perceived that the ball was really of lead, and was only painted in imitation of the well-known fruit. No doubt, however, the difficulty was the juggling, and the genuineness of the fruit, like the nationality of the performer, was a secondary matter.

But the prestige of England as an acrobat-producing country did not require to be upheld by Turkey. In the reign of Charles II. a native rope-dancer—Jacob Hall, whose portrait is preserved in Grainger's collection—won golden opinions in London. He was one of the handsomest men one could see, uniting in his form the grace of Adonis with the strength of Hercules. He enjoyed much good luck, even at the court and for some time "balanced the king" in the heart of the tender Castlemain, afterwards the Duchess of Cleveland, as may be seen in "Hamilton's Memoirs," and the chronicles and ballads of the time.

France was not behind England, and the age of Louis XIV. would not have been complete if the art of rope dancing had been at fault when the other arts flourished so conspicuously. But these mortals, accustomed to walk in the air, had very high pretensions, and encroached upon the province of the actors, who, consequently, made loud complaints. The drama certainly deserves greater patronage than acrobatic feats; and decrees, which often required to be renewed, confined them to the category of

shows at fairs — those of St. Germain, St. Ovide, and St. Laurent, especially the first, being the chief theatres of such exploits. Gradually a new system began to be introduced, and these entertainments were conducted on the principle of association. Individuals formed themselves into *troupes*, each member of which laboured for the good of all. The rope-dancers were not merely hirelings in the pay of an *entrepreneur*, they were parts of a public company.

Among the last of the unattached performers we may mention Trevelin, the first who danced upon the rope at Paris without a balance at the commencement of the seventeenth century, and another who, in 1649, fell into the Seine head foremost in crossing his lofty line from the tower of Nesle to that of Grand Prevôt. "He had, perhaps, forgotten," says M. Fournel, "to eat beforehand that root which serves to fortify performers of this kind against giddiness and stupor; but he had at least the prudence, on which he had afterwards reason to congratulate himself, to have his rope extended above the river." Bonnet also speaks of the marvellous herb referred to, and even states that the chamois and wild-goat browse upon it before climbing to the summits of the cliffs among which they dwell.

The companies acknowledged to be the most remarkable at the fair of St. Germain were those of Allard, of Bertrand, and of Maurice Vondrebeck. The last, as his name indicates, was a native of Holland. It is he, without doubt, who figures in a series of engravings, the work of Bonnard, in the "Bibliothèque Impérial." The pictures represent the great feats of two couples of dancers, Dutch and English, and a single Turk. According to M. Fournel, "They danced upon the cord armed from head to foot,

with their legs linked together, and their feet sunk in sabots or boots. They went through the flag trick, played the violin upon their back, upon their head, between their legs, and had with them monkeys, rats, and serpents, that imitated the cleverest feats of the rope-dancers."

The tradititions of the St. Germain fair and of other places not less frequented were continued by Nicolet, an exhibitor of marionettes, down to the eighteenth century. This man, who has made a name for himself in the art he professed, had a maxim by which he always squared his conduct before the public. It was never to *astound* the audience, but to hold them in suspense by a series of efforts, the gradation of which should be judiciously managed. With him every evolution led to another more astonishing, and the series closed with the most arduous and wonderful feat he knew. It was thus that arose the popular saying, "*De plus en plus fort, comme chez Nicolet.*" It was not, however, to his intelligence that this saying could apply, for Nicolet was not remarkable for his sense. One day, he happened to pass by one of his musicians, who, sitting in his place in the orchestra, was letting his instrument lie idle, while the others were playing.

"What are you doing there, and why don't you play your part?" asked Nicolet.

"I am counting the rests," answered the musician.

"Oh, indeed!" cried Nicolet, overwhelming the man with abuse, "I have not engaged you to count the rests. Play like the others, or I shall dismiss you!"

It might be said that there was no occasion for his putting himself to expense, as he only directed wooden comedians. But it is here that *l'esprit* is most necessary, for actors who cannot speak are unable to correct the im-

perfections of the piece. Nicolet, however, had a soul above marionettes, and his ambition was eventually crowned with success; he bought land upon which he built a theatre with real actors of flesh and blood, and also with rope dancers. Having had the honour of performing at Marly before Louis XV., in 1772, he obtained the privilege of calling his theatre "Le Théâtre des Grands Danseurs du Roi."

From this establishment went forth a woman whose boldness and agility were the glory of the First Empire. The present generation has seen her—her hair now white—taking again the perilous road of the tight rope, though with less briskness than in her early days. The medals of St. Helena could alone tell us what Madame Sacqui was, when, in her blooming youth, and in the height of her fame, she celebrated in her own fashion the triumphs of the French armies, representing the shock of battle, the taking of towns, and the passage of the St. Bernard. We should have seen her at Tivoli upon a sloping rope, sixty feet above ground, throwing herself forward and darting to the tower amid splendid fireworks and appropriate decorations, then bounding back from the cloud of smoke like a Homeric goddess, reposing finally in an apotheosis of Bengal lights.

This line of "business" being once traced out, women prosecuted it with ardour. Admirers of these amusements still remember La Malaga, "a young person," says M. Fournel, "with a sweet and pensive countenance, full of expression, who danced with the wings of a sylph, and the quiet graces sung by Horace." This lady had a daughter who took to walking upon the rope before she could walk upon the ground, and who made her *début* at Versailles in 1814, before an assembly of kings. It was in honour

of the allied sovereigns that she executed her wonderful ascent of 200 feet above one of the lakes.

The women must not, however, make us forget the artists of the other sex; Furioso, for instance, who was still living at the beginning of the present century, and who was one of the most astounding acrobats mentioned in history. Furioso's performance was like his name—tempestuous, whirling, diabolical. One can appreciate the rage which took possession of him when he was surpassed by two novices at the hall of Montansier, upon the very theatre of his own exploits, but the public were not long in returning to their allegiance, when they heard that on the occasion of the approaching Saint Napoleon *fête*, he was to cross the Seine upon one rope from the Pont de la Concorde to the Pont Royal.

This feat was considered too dangerous, and the police opposed it—a striking illustration of the primitive condition of society in 1810! Since then what progress has been made! Niagara, with its marvellous cataract, has been traversed upon a tight-rope many feet above the surface of the water, the acrobat walking, running, and dancing along his slender pathway. Blondin, who performed this daring feat, must be considered one of the greatest rope dancers —if not the very greatest—who ever lived. It is almost unnecessary to tell the present generation of the triumphs of this consummate artist, for he is still among us, and has been seen on his giddy road in almost every part of the world. The varieties of the entertainment—if the word may be used in such an application—which he places before his patrons surpass anything we read of in the *ana* of the acrobats of past times. There is but one Niagara, but Blondin's rope can be stretched in equally dangerous positions, and his bold freaks can be played as well over the

heads of ten thousand spectators at the Crystal Palace as over the awful waters of the great cataract. He can walk or run along the cord; he can dine and play the fiddle on it; he can traverse it with a heavy man on his back; he can wheel a barrow before him; nay, he has even crossed the abyss on a bicycle. There is nothing within the bounds of his art that can daunt this quick-eyed, steady-limbed, bold-hearted man, who has no rivals, and, in his greater achievements, no imitators.

It would be well if the same could be said of another department of acrobatics, which may well be assigned a place here on account of its origin in our own days, though, strictly speaking, it should be found noticed elsewhere. Trapeze-flying was introduced by the great Léotard, and at once became one of the most popular items on the programmes at the lower-class places of amusement all over Europe. The performer swings himself from one side of a hall to the other by means of a bar, attached to two ropes, suspended from the roof. At intervals between the furthest points are other *trapèzes*, which in turn are thrown to him in his passage through the air, and he darts from one to the other at great heights from the stage, so timing his movements that as soon as he leaves one he is in a position to grasp the other. These evolutions are rendered more attractive to the vulgar—who delight in exhibitions which combine daring with danger to life—by every kind of somersault which can increase the acrobat's risk of breaking his neck or his limbs. Numerous accidents have consequently occurred to athletes whose skill has not been equal to their foolhardiness; and, as the "art" appears to be dying out, it is to be hoped that improvement in the public taste will prevent its revival.

The essential point in rope dancing is the maintenance of the centre of gravity. In order to keep erect and steady on the rope the ancient tumblers always carried a pole, furnished with a ball of lead at each extremity, and this balancer they directed sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left, according as they wished to change the position of their centre of gravity. But the new school have long since been able to dispense with the use of this safeguard, and performers now climb to the greatest heights, their arms free and unembarassed by any burden. Some content themselves with fixing the eyes upon a distant point in the same plane as the rope, and for the rest trust themselves to Providence and to their suppleness, and the strength of the aërial thread that sustains them in space.

The same confidence animates the young Spaniards, who, on certain fête days, mount into the clock towers of the cathedral, and ring a full peal. While the regular bell-ringers are reposing, these amateurs hang on to the bells, throw them forward with all their force, and follow them in their wonderful leaps. In our churches they sound the bells calmly and regularly; but in Spain every man who offers may exercise his skill; and the duration of the ringing depends upon the caprice, or rather upon the strength and patience of the ringers. The reader may imagine what an uproar there is when all the bells of a cathedral are being banged about in this original and furious manner. If one enters, for instance, the Giralda at Seville, when the twenty bells are swinging at the same time, the noise is enough to give one a headache. The spectacle, too, of the ringers hanging in space, and grasping the bell with their arms, is a very singular one. "The first time that I was witness of this operation," says a French tourist,

BELL RINGERS AT SEVILLE.

"I was passing near the church El Salvador del Mundo; people were looking up in the air, and one old man cried aloud near me, 'Those are not men, they are devils.' This caused me to look up like the others, and I believed at first that some unfortunate man had entangled himself in the rope that is used for putting the bell in motion. I soon found out, however, that it was a matter of sport. Another ringer appeared in his turn, suspended in the air, or holding the bell by the ears, or by the wooden framework, and, following it in its movement, found himself with his head downwards towards the square, when it again entered the belfry."

The inhabitants of Tahiti take pleasure in suspending and balancing themselves on a long rope attached to the top of some palm-tree that overhangs the sea. They are primitive beings, accustomed to climbing to great heights, and if while indulging in this amusement they have a fall, they only find themselves in their favourite element. They are as much accustomed to water as to dry land, and move with as much freedom and rapidity in the one as in the other.

# CHAPTER IX.

## SWIMMING.

**Swimming in Ancient Times — Hero and Leander — Crossing the Hellespont — Lord Byron achieves the Feat — His Powers as a Swimmer — His Great Feat at Venice — Importance of the Art among the Ancients — Roman Women — Aquatic Pantomimes — Flavius Josephus.**

A SWIMMER is simply a runner who, so to speak, has changed his ground, and between the two exercises there is only a difference of the elements. Aristotle considers them as two members of a family, or rather as one and the same exercise, demanding great nervous and muscular power and flexibility.

Formerly, as indeed at all times, the best swimmers were the inhabitants of sea-coasts and islands, or peoples accustomed to traverse the ocean for the purposes of commerce. The Phœnicians and the Carthaginians were very expert in the art, which was held in high esteem by all ancient nations. The Persians were the only exceptions to the general rule, for, as they rendered an idolatrous worship to their rivers, they did not dare to plunge their hands, much less their whole bodies, into them. Among the Greeks, the Athenians, and especially the inhabitants of the isle of Delos, were considered the best swimmers. The skill of the latter has passed into a proverb. Socrates, not being able to explain certain passages in Heraclitus the philosopher which seemed to be obscure and conflicting,

exclaims, "To find one's way amid so many reefs would puzzle even a swimmer of the Isle of Delos."

Leander could not boast of the famous island as the place of his birth, but he was none the less a great swimmer. He was smitten, as every one knows, by the charms of a young and beautiful priestess named Hero, who lived at Sestos, upon the Hellespont, on the European shore, while he himself dwelt at Abydos, on the opposite or Asiatic coast. Guided by a beacon-light which the young priestess was careful to kindle on the summit of her tower, Leander swam the Hellespont every evening, spent some time with his beloved, and returned again in the same manner. When the wind blew with too much violence, Hero sheltered the flickering light with her robe, for she knew Leander felt no fear so long as that flame invited him onwards. But on one fatal night she had forgotten this precaution, and perhaps had altogether neglected to kindle her fire. She was cruelly punished, for on the following morning, at day-break, she saw gleaming upon the shore the white limbs of Leander, whose dead body had been cast up by the waves upon the beach. The ill-fated youth, losing sight of the beacon on the tower, and unable to contend against the darkness and the currents, had yielded up his latest breath to the waves. In her horror and despair, Hero threw herself into the sea, inviting the fate to which her lover had succumbed.

Hero and Leander.
(From a medal.)

It is somewhat curious to speculate why Leander, instead of swimming the Hellespont, did not simply paddle across

in a boat. This mode of transit would certainly not have been so cheap, but it would have been much less dangerous and fatiguing. It may be said in answer that perhaps the youth was anxious not to attract attention to his nightly passage, and thereby publish his amour with the fair lady to the world. But however this may be, it is sufficient, upon the authority of Ovid and Musæus, to state that it was Leander's practice *to swim* to and from the opposite bank where Hero lived, and as the narratives of poets and romancers need not of necessity be received as articles of faith, each may decide as he pleases upon the details of the fine old story.

The important point is not to know whether Leander really crossed the Hellespont by swimming, but whether others have been able to do so—whether, in fact, the feat is practicable. The distance from Abydos to Sestos was thirty stades, or three miles six furlongs. That Leander swam so far twice a night it is difficult to believe, and in view of these figures, many have at once relegated the touching tale to the domain of fable. Others, however, attempt to prove that it is not a fiction, and, according to them, as it was only natural that Leander should seek to shorten his journey as much as possible, he walked along the sea-shore till he came straight opposite the tower in which Hero lived. By good luck the width of the Hellespont is much diminished at this point, being only seven stades, or about 1,300 yards. But none of the critics who calmly discussed by their firesides the probable authenticity of this adventure showed an inclination to find out whether it was possible to swim the Hellespont by attempting to repeat the feat of Leander. This was, however, the best means of removing all doubt as to the story, and setting to

rest another difficulty upon which there had been much discussion, namely, in what sense the epithet by which Homer characterises the Hellespont (*apeiros*, infinite, without limit) is to be understood. Among the heroes of antiquity we find only one Curtius leaping into the chasm, and the one man who was ready to risk his life in attempting Leander's feat was Lord Byron. The circumstances, however, were different, for while as a reward of his adventure Leander won Hero's love, the English poet only caught a fever, which confined him several days to his bed.

> "'Twere hard to say who fared the best,
> Sad mortals, thus the gods still plague you!
> He lost his labour, I my jest,
> For he was drowned, and I've the ague."

With respect to the second matter, the use of the word *apeiros* in reference to the Hellespont, Byron says, in a note to his "Bride of Abydos," that "The wrangling about the epithet 'the broad Hellespont,' or 'the boundless Hellespont,' whether it means one or the other, or what it means at all, has fallen beyond the possibility of detail. I have even heard it disputed on the spot, and not foreseeing a speedy conclusion to the controversy, amused myself with swimming across it in the meantime, and probably may again before the point is settled. Indeed, the question as to the truth of the 'tale of Troy divine,' still continues, much of it resting upon the talismanic word *apeiros:* probably Homer had the same notion of distance that a coquette has to time; and when he talks of boundless means half a mile; as the coquette, by a figure, when she says eternal attachment simply specifies three weeks." That is how the sceptical Byron speaks of Homer; how the lame poet treats the blind one.

It was on the 3rd of May, 1810, that Byron attempted this feat, in concert with a friend, Lieutenant Ekenhead. He crossed the strait in an hour, the direct distance being 2,130 yards, although the force of the currents, which drive the swimmer far to both right and left, makes the achievement equal to a passage of twice or perhaps three times the space. An Englishman named Turner subsequently attempted to cross the Hellespont from Asia to Europe, but after being about twenty-five minutes in the water, found the adventure too much for him, and, turning back, regained the shore, fatigued and breathless. Jealous of the success of Byron, who had crossed the strait in the opposite direction, Turner, on his return to England, pointed out that Byron had performed but the easier part of the task, for he had only gone from Europe to Asia, while Leander made the double passage—the return being much the more difficult of the two, owing to the extreme roughness of the current.

The poet attached far too much importance to such triumphs to be able to keep silent under an attack like this, and, in a powerful reply, dated from Ravenna, 21st February, 1821, the strong swimmer makes great fun of Mr. Turner, who denied the possibility of crossing the Hellespont because he himself had been unable to do so. Mr. Turner's defeat proved only that there was not in him the stuff out of which good swimmers are made. As to the current being stronger or weaker in one direction or the other, Byron knew nothing of the matter, and, indeed, did not trouble himself about it. Again, in 1818, being then at Venice, Mengaldo, an Italian, who was attached, in the position of *avocat*, to the French consulate there, and was skilled in this exercise, had boasted

that he could beat his lordship. Strangely enough, like his antagonist, the Italian was lame, having had both his legs broken in the wars of the Empire, but the circumstance is one which Byron has not noticed, though his account of the struggle is otherwise perfectly correct. A match was made, and the principals, three in number (for a friend of Byron's had volunteered to join in the adventure), set out from the Isle of Lido, at the mouth of the lagoon. From this point they went steadily on to Venice—each well up with his neighbours; but, at the entrance to the Grand Canal, which, as every one knows, divides the town into two parts, Mengaldo gave in. Byron's friend got up as far as the Rialto, when he also cried "Hold! enough!" not so much from exhaustion as from being overcome with cold. He had remained four hours in the water without quitting it—only taking rest on his back, as, in accordance with the conditions agreed upon, he was entitled to do. As to Byron, he swam through the whole of the Grand Canal, passed Venice, and bravely went on his way to one of the islands that lie on the other side of the city. He had swum for four hours and twenty minutes, and he could, he said, have continued for two hours longer, though he was hampered by his clothes. Byron was at this time thirty years of age, and his companions about the same age. After such an experience, exclaimed he, what could make him doubt the exploit of Leander?

The ancients did not practise the art of swimming for pleasure or for the benefit of their health alone, but also from a motive which had its origin in one of the principles of their religion. We know that the peoples of antiquity dreaded above everything the being deprived of the honours of sepulture. The fear of perishing in the waves, and

having no other tomb than the bottom of the sea or the bed of a river, impelled them to practise this exercise with more ardour and perseverance than modern swimmers, who are not influenced by similar considerations. Speaking on this subject the Abbé Amilhon, a member of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres in the eighteenth century, says in his "Researches on the Exercise of Swimming among the Ancients":—"This prejudice, which rendered men more careful of their lives, tended to the benefit of the state, in preserving to the country those valuable citizens, who, when occasion required, could be of essential service. It is, perhaps, partly because of this religious opinion that a multitude of illustrious men among the Greeks as well as the Romans owe their escape on the sea from the greatest perils."

"The exercise of swimming," adds the same learned author, "has not only preserved the lives of many famous personages, but it has enabled not a few to perform successfully acts which, had they been unable to swim well, they would never have dreamed of attempting." In illustration of his proposition, the Abbé recalls the history of Horatius Cocles, who, he says, would never have had the hardihood to face the Etruscans upon the bridge leading into Rome without perfect confidence in his swimming powers. Indeed, as soon as the bridge which he was defending was cut down, he jumped into the river, and saved himself by putting these powers in use. He was fully armed, but this was in accordance with the custom of the Roman soldiers, who swam easily, although burdened with heavy panoply. Scipio Africanus, as is reported by Silius Italicus, for the encouragement of his soldiers, crossed rivers in this way at their head, his cuirass upon his back. Sertorius,

though wounded, swam from one side of the Rhine to the other, burdened in the same way. Marius, though old and broken down with fatigue, was able to escape the emissaries of Sylla by swimming to two ships which he saw from the coast. Cæsar must have been a powerful swimmer, for at the siege of Alexandria he saved his life by his knowledge of this exercise, holding his tablets above the water in his left hand, and using only his right hand to swim with, while he pushed before him with his teeth his military equipage, which he did not wish to leave in the hands of his enemies, and plunged his head under water from time to time to avoid the shower of arrows that followed him.

The Romans were from their youth accustomed to the practice of this useful art. As soon as they had performed their exercises in the Campus Martius, they hastened to plunge into the waters of the Tiber, and so refresh themselves after the fatigues they had undergone. But this custom, like all the other commendable customs of the Romans, came in time to be discontinued; and Vegetius, who lived during the reign of the emperor Valentinian the Young, mourns over the decadence of an art, the utility of which, both for cavalry and infantry, he speaks of in the highest terms.

The Roman women were not inferior to the men either in strength or courage, and swimming formed part of their education, as it did in the case of the young Lacedæmonian girls. It was by means of her expertness in swimming that Clelia, flying from Porsenna's camp, was able to cross the Tiber, and regain the friendly walls of Rome; and that, at a later period, Agrippina contrived to escape from the boat in which Nero had placed her. In ancient Greece, the women of Macedonia were not less courageous, and never

bathed except in cold water. Philip of Macedon, finding on a certain occasion one of his officers taking a warm bath, dismissed him on the spot; and, in order to make him blush for his effeminacy, described to him the custom of his native women, who used always cold water, even at the period of confinement.

It is not astonishing that swimmers so expert excelled in the aquatic exercises, of which Martial in one of his epigrams makes mention. "Young girls," he says, "and young men, disguised as nymphs, were seen in the water, sometimes sporting in a chariot like that of the fabled nereids, and grouping themselves in the most varied designs. At one time they would bring out the figure of a trident; then interlacing differently, they came together again in the shape of an anchor, an oar, or a boat; this last figure, dissolving itself, became all at once transformed into the constellation of Castor and Pollux, and to it succeeded a sail swollen out with the wind. These swimmers, in fact, could do in the water what the pantomimists did by means of their dances in combination, representing upon the stage of the theatre a great variety of subjects. Such games and fêtes in the water could not fail to be useful in maintaining the expertness of the citizens in swimming, but in the course of time they degenerated, and were practised only for immoral purposes."

Among the barbarous hordes that invaded the Roman empire, several are mentioned as excelling in the art of swimming, more particularly the Germans. From their earliest infancy their children were plunged in a river regularly once every day, and it was thus that their mothers hardened them, and rendered them able to endure the cold and bleak winds. The story of Thetis plunging her son

Achilles in the waters of the Styx to render him invulnerable, is without doubt only an allegory of the custom which formerly prevailed of bathing infants from their birth in the coldest rivers and lakes.

The Gallo-Romans were especially fond of the exercise, but in regard to skill they were beaten by the Franks. We read in an ancient chronicle that "the Herules excelled in running, the Huns in throwing the javelin, and the Francs in swimming."

Among others who practised swimming we must not forget the Jews, of whom the historian Flavius Josephus was not the least accomplished. While travelling from Jerusalem to Rome, the ship in which he was crossing the Mediterranean, and which carried six hundred passengers, was wrecked in the Adriatic. Josephus swam all the night. "God be praised!" says he, in his autobiography, "at dawn we fell in with a ship which took me on board, with eighty of my companions, who, like myself, had strength to reach it." Side by side with this remarkable story, we may mention that of the inhabitants of Messina, who, in the Carthaginian war against Dionysius of Syracuse, threw themselves into the sea, that they might not fall into the hands of the general, Hamilcar, and of whom several swam safely to the Italian shore.

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## CHAPTER X.

### SWIMMERS OF AMERICA AND OCEANIA.

**A Fight in the Water, an Episode in the History of Florida—The Sports of the Tahitians in the time of Cook.**

No nation could boast of having had more indefatigable and courageous swimmers than the Indians of the southern portions of America at the time of the discovery of that vast continent by the Europeans. Among these natives, it is to the inhabitants of Florida, at present one of the most fertile states of the Union, that the palm ought to be awarded. The Floridians were accustomed to fish far out at sea, and after maintaining themselves in the water by swimming only, they brought back the spoil with them when the burden was not too heavy. The women were equally clever in the practice of the art, and could swim across the widest rivers, carrying their infants on their backs, in the same way as, with the lightness of the squirrel, they could climb to the tops of the highest trees.

Florida was discovered by Sebastian Cabot in 1496, but he only beheld the country, without setting foot on it. Jean Ponce de Leon was the first who landed upon this fertile soil, in March, 1512 or 1513, and as the date was Palm Sunday—the Sabbath of Branches—he gave it the appropriate name of Florida. After him several Spaniards tried to penetrate into this new region, but without success. It was at this time that a bold adventurer, Ferdinand de Soto, appeared before the Emperor Charles V. at Valladolid, and

offered to conquer Florida for the benefit of the Spanish monarch, and received permission. Born at Villa-Nueva de Barca-Rotta, of noble parents, this bold and ambitious man had been, in the year 1533, one of the twelve conquerors of Peru, and had returned with great riches, not including the magnificent present he had received from the Inca Atahualpa, so treacherously treated by the Spaniards. All the others of the band, satisfied with their lot, lived peaceably in Spain upon the treasures they had plundered from the unhappy Peruvians; but Ferdinand de Soto was possessed by the demon of adventure and change, and was tormented by the recollection that he had not conquered even the smallest kingdom for himself, while Hernando Cortez had won Mexico, and Pizzaro and Almagro had made themselves masters of Peru. Why should not he in his turn carve out for himself some country in America? Why should he not win for himself the title *Conquestador*, or, rather, butcher of the Indians? Had he not as much bravery and as few scruples as the other adventurers? It was with these ideas that he turned his eyes upon Florida, the right of which Charles gave to him—the right that belonged neither to the one nor the other.

The Spanish captain first landed in Florida in the year 1539, and there committed excesses similar to those that had marked the progress of his compatriots in other parts of the continent. The Indians in despair hanged themselves rather than fall into the hands of the foreigners and become their slaves. It is related that one day a Spanish officer, rope in hand, arrived at the place where a number of Indians had gathered for the purpose of committing suicide, and threatened that if they persisted he would hang himself along with them. The Indians, terrified, dispersed without

attempting to carry out their design, preferring life, however painful it might be, to the torture of finding themselves in another world in company with one of their tyrants. What a suggestive proof of the aversion—of the hatred and horror of the Spaniards entertained by those tribes! Nevertheless, all the Indians did not, like those of whom we have spoken, give way to despair and suicide, but defended themselves with resolution and bravery, as the historian of their country, Garcilasso di Vega, informs us.

Ferdinand de Soto had entered one of the provinces of the country, then called Vitachuco, the cacique or governor of which detested the Spaniards and their cruel practices. He attempted to draw them into an ambush, but the foreigners, made aware of his design, kept themselves on their guard. The cacique, who, according to custom, bore the same name as the province and its capital, Vitachuco, had assembled on an extensive plain outside the city about 10,000 of his subjects, all picked and active men, with their feathers so arranged on their heads as to make them look almost giants. On a signal agreed upon, the Floridians were to have fallen upon the Spaniards, who numbered not more than 300 men. Instead, however, of waiting, and allowing themselves to be surprised, the clever invaders reversed the plan, and commencing the attack, and falling upon their enemy, the chief, who was unprepared, was surrounded, and unable to offer any resistance. The plain on which the Floridians were marshalled was bounded on one side by a forest, on the other by two marshes, or rather a marsh and a lake. The Indians fought well, but they were not able to bear long the assaults of the Spanish cavalry. Some sought refuge in the darkness of the forest, others in the muddy waters of the marsh, sure that none could pursue

FLORIDIANS FIGHTING WHILE SWIMMING. (1539.)

them into those dangerous retreats. About 900, more closely pursued than their companions, leaped into the lake, which was nearly a mile broad, and so long that the eye could not reach the extremity. The Spaniards, drawing up on the bank, harassed the unfortunate beings who would not surrender by discharging arrows at them, and shooting them down with their muskets. On their side the Floridians shot away their last shafts, and such was their determination, that they were to be seen three or four abreast swimming together, and bearing on their shoulders one of their comrades, who went on shooting until every arrow had been discharged.

These intrepid swimmers continued to resist in this manner until night fell, without listening to any proposal as to a truce. The Spaniards drew a line of soldiers round the lake to prevent the escape of any of the natives under cover of the darkness. As soon as one of them made any show of approaching the bank, the enemy promised to treat him well if he surrendered, but at the same time dragged him up only to throw him back again into the water, thus exhausting his patience and his strength. The victims, however, were even more determined than their butchers, and preferred death, they said, to the dominion of the Spaniards. Some of them, nevertheless, overcome with fatigue, slowly sought the shore and surrendered, and in the morning about fifty were out of the water. Others, seeing that their comrades were well treated by the enemy, followed their example, but only to change their minds again, for, after with difficulty reaching the bank, they in many cases returned to the water, resolved not to quit it to the last. There were thus some who for twenty-four hours were in the lake, swimming all the time.

On the following day 200 of the Indians gave in their submission, "half dead," says Garcilasso di Vega, "swelled with the water they had swallowed, and overcome with hunger, sleep, and exhaustion." Those who remained all surrendered after a little, with the exception of seven, who, more intractable than the rest, remained in the water, setting their vanquishers at defiance, and crying out that they might kill them with exhaustion, but could never compel them to give in. They had swum about in this fashion for thirty hours without having taken any food, when, surprised at such boldness and power of endurance, the Spanish captain ordered twelve of his best soldiers to enter the lake and bring the seven natives to shore. The command was strictly obeyed, and the unhappy Indians were dragged to land by their legs, arms, or heads. "Their appearance," says the historian, "was most pitiful. They fell upon the ground more dead than alive, and in a state in which we might imagine men to be who had fought swimming in the water for thirty consecutive hours. The Spaniards, somewhat pitying their sad condition, and admiring their pluck, carried them into the town, where they brought them round, doing the poor savages more good by their kindness than by their medicine."

There is not in the history of the world—even in the annals of Rome—another instance of heroic endurance and brave resistance equal to this. Thirty hours of swimming and fighting at one and the same time! The names of those who were associated with de Soto in his foolish and criminal enterprise have been recorded, but who can tell us those of the noble patriots of Florida? The Spaniards were attracted to their country only by the hope of pillage, their sole aim being the discovery of mines of gold and silver. One fact

recorded by Garcilasso di Vega proves well the extent of their greed. Immediately after landing, a garrison had been left on the sea-shore, while the body of the little army set off towards the north in search of adventure. When a place had been found suitable for encampment, the general hastened to those who had been left behind to inform them of the fact, and order them to join the army. What was the first thought of the garrison men as they beheld their comrades returning? To speak of the general under whose banner they were gathered? To inquire into the state of the army? Not at all. They only asked their brothers in arms whether gold had been found in these new regions in any quantity. "Thus," says the historian, who is horrified at such a trait, "the thirst for the precious metals had such a sway over the men, that it made them easily forget their duty. The poor Floridians, on the contrary, fought only to defend their hearths."

When the seven swimmers had recovered their senses, they were brought before de Soto, who inquired of them for what reason they did not surrender, like their companions, knowing well that death must soon put an end to their hopeless efforts. "Vitachuco had placed his confidence in us," they answered, modestly, "and it was our duty to show that we were not unworthy of his favour." Among these prisoners were three who were not more than eighteen or nineteen years of age. They were asked what had determined them to remain so long in the water, as they, being so young, could not occupy any post in the army. "By our birth we were destined for the highest offices, and we are bound to set an example." In listening to these noble and simple replies, all the more touching as given by mere boys, the Spaniards could not restrain their tears, and their

general granted them life and liberty, and sent them to their families with many presents.

De Soto was unable to conquer this country, and, attacked by a malignant fever, he died at the age of forty-two years, after having spent more than 100,000 ducats over his unlucky enterprise. "He was," says di Vega "a vigilant and adroit man, fond of glory, patient in misfortune, severe upon shortcomings in discipline and duty, but indulgent in every other respect, generous and charitable towards his men, and as brave and hardy as any of the previous captains, who made their way sword in hand in the New World."

The inhabitants of South America were not surpassed by those of the northern part of the continent in skill in swimming. The Brazilians and Peruvians were such excellent swimmers that, says Lescarbot, they would remain in the water eight days at a time if hunger did not drive them on shore. They never were afraid of perishing from fatigue, though they had, as a rule, a wholesome dread of being devoured by sharks. The same may be said of the people of Oceania. The navigators who, in the eighteenth century, explored the archipelagos of the southern hemisphere, represent the natives of that part of the world as excellent swimmers. The frequent plunges in the sea in which they indulged familiarised them at an early age with it. In the time of Cook the South Sea Islanders were in the habit of bathing three times a day in running water. It was in the salt waves that both sexes loved most to disport themselves, frolicking there after the fashion, or supposed fashion, of tritons and naiads. Who has not read the charming picture which Captain Cook has given us of his arrival in Tahitian waters, while engaged in his second voyage round the world? It was at the dawn of day on one of those

beautiful mornings which more commonly inspire poets than sailors. A waft of wind from shore carried to them a delicious perfume, and made the surface of the waters wrinkle. The mountains, covered with forests, reared their gigantic heads, upon which they already perceived the light of the rising sun. Near them they beheld a line of gently sloping hills, wooded like the mountains, agreeably varied with green and brown tints. Beneath was a plain adorned with bread-fruit trees, and behind these a line of noble palms. Everybody seemed to be still asleep. The morning was only dawning, and the bay lay in darkness. They could, however, distinguish the houses and the trees and canoes upon the shore. Half a mile from the shore the billows sounded against a reef of rock, but within it all was beautiful tranquillity. The daylight now began to spread over the sky, and soon the islanders were out, and adding animation to the charming scene. At the sight of the vessels many hastened to launch their boats and row over to the mariners, who were highly pleased to look at them.

In this fairy scene and in these tranquil waters a number of young Tahitian girls were soon seen disporting themselves, their naked breasts and dishevelled hair making them look like syrens, whom, indeed, they rivalled in their beauty and their tastes. They soon came swimming enticingly round the ship, diving into the sea to pick up the glass beads or other trifles thrown to them from the deck. It was not with the intention of inducing them to show off their powers as swimmers that in the first instance the ornaments were flung to them. One of the officers, in handing some trifling articles to a child about six years of age, happened to let them fall into the sea, when the youngster, at once leaping out of the canoe, dived for them, and

reappeared with them in a few seconds. Observing the feat with astonishment, and wishing to see further proofs of the expertness of the natives, the officers threw down several ornaments. A multitude of men and women amused the sailors by their astonishing performances in the water, not only catching glass beads flung to them, but also great nails, which, before they could be seized by the divers, must, from their weight, have sunk a considerable distance. Some remained so long in the water, that the English could scarcely help regarding them as amphibious.

These South Sea Islanders were just as much at their ease when, instead of sporting in tranquil seas, smooth as mirrors, they found themselves in stormy waters, with the waves raging against the reefs or thundering upon the shore. The spectacle was then of quite a different kind, the surge rolling in at a prodigious height, breaking upon the beach. Cook had never yet seen such tremendous billows, and says that it would have been impossible for their boats to have lived in such a sea, while even the most able European swimmer would infallibly have perished, either choked by the billows or bruised to death on the shore. But the Tahitians seemed perfectly at home in the raging element, and when the waves rushed down upon them they dived through them and came up on the other side with incredible ease and agility. What rendered this spectacle even more striking was the fact that the swimmers, finding in the middle of the sea the stern of an old canoe, seized it, and pushed it before them to a considerable distance. Then two or three Indians would place themselves together, and turning the square end of the canoe against the waves, they were driven towards the coast with incredible rapidity, and were, indeed, sometimes cast upon the sands. Generally,

however, the wave broke over them before they had got half way, and then diving, they reappeared on the other side, always keeping hold of the wreck of the canoe. They would then go back swimming, and return by the same manœuvre, just as children, on holidays, climb Greenwich Hill for the fun of rolling down again. The English visitors remained for half an hour contemplating this astonishing scene, and during this period none of the swimmers went to land to rest—indeed all seemed to take the liveliest pleasure in the amusement.

# CHAPTER XI.

## DIVERS.

**Diving in Former Times—Scyllias and his Daughter—Antony and Cleopatra in Egypt—Fish Caught with the Line—Glaucus and the Nymph—From Scylla into Charybdis—The Divers of Sicily—Schiller's "Diver"—The Diving-bell known in the Time of Aristotle—The Roman Divers—Divers in Ancient Warfare.**

SWIMMING alone does not suffice, and if one wishes to carry it to the point of perfection, it is necessary to combine with it a more difficult and dangerous art—that of diving.

The ancients, who kept up constant communication with each other by the rivers—those great moving roads—and by the sea—which connects rather than separates the nations on its shores—had practised this exercise from the most remote times. Diving was at first made use of for catching the fish necessary for the food of man, and is so used at the present day by savage nations. Afterwards, as navigation developed, professional divers were engaged in fishing up vessels that had been wrecked, and the treasures that had been lost with them. When the spread of commerce had called new wants into existence, and had created a taste for ornament and luxury, divers found it a profitable pursuit to bring to the surface whatever beautiful things the sea held in its "treasured caves and cells." Lastly, when greed, jealousy, and hate, engendered by these luxuries, resulted in bloody wars between nations, the art of diving took its place in military science, to which it rendered essential service.

The most famous diver of antiquity—perhaps of all time—was that Scyllias of whom Herodotus speaks. After a tempest had dispersed the Persian fleet, Xerxes hired this accomplished diver, who, when he had recovered much of the lost treasure, was rewarded with a fair share. This Greek, however, desired to return to his own countrymen, and after waiting a long time, the occasion offered itself. A tempest was raging, during which the diver, making use of his wonderful skill, cut the cables of a portion of the Persian fleet—thus causing the loss of many of the vessels—and then sought safety in flight by swimming. But from the point at which he took to the sea to the spot where he emerged—*i.e.*, from Aphetes to Artemisium—the distance was three leagues, the crossing of which he accomplished altogether under water. Notwithstanding his well-known *penchant* for the marvellous, Herodotus does not hesitate to place this extraordinary feat in the category of fictions, but he takes care at the same time to say that he does not tell all he could of this great diver, fearing to admit into his narrative as much falsehood as truth. Pausanias informs us that Scyllias had a daughter, Cyana, not less skilful than her father, whom she assisted in his operations, proving of great use in cutting away the anchored vessels of the Persians. A double statue was erected in their honour at Delphi, in order to perpetuate the memory of the services which both had rendered to their country.

It is impossible now to determine the exact time the divers of antiquity could remain under water without coming to the surface, but it would appear from various passages in the Greek and Latin authors that persons who gave themselves up to the business could do so for a considerable time. The inhabitants of Rhodes and Delos, and the

people of Egypt, were the best divers, and were able, it was said, to remain under water for incredible periods. Antony and Cleopatra tested the qualifications of those of their time under somewhat amusing circumstances. We leave the narration to the biographer, Plutarch, who says:—"Antony went on one occasion to fish with the line, and as he could catch nothing he was much annoyed, all the more so because Cleopatra was present. He therefore secretly gave orders to a number of fishers, that when he again threw in his line they should suddenly plunge into the sea, attach to his hook a fish of the kind which he might otherwise have caught, and repeat the operation twice or thrice. Cleopatra at once saw through the trick, but, disguising the fact, pretended to be astonished every time the line came up bringing fish with it. Openly she praised Antony's skill, but privately she told her attendants how the wonder was done, and said that on the morrow they should see some sport on the water. They accordingly came to the angling next day in great numbers, assembling together in the fishermen's boats. Antony having dropped his line, Cleopatra ordered one of her servants to dive before his men, and fix upon the hook some old salted fish. This done, Antony, believing that he had caught something, rapidly pulled in the line, and then, as may well be supposed, a loud burst of laughter greeted the appearance of the cured fish. Cleopatra, smiling, said to the astonished Antony—'Leave to us of Egypt, sire, the catching of fish. It is not your line—your prey is towns and cities, countries and kingdoms.'"

It is very possible that the tritons and sea-gods of the ancient mythology sung by the poets were originally only simple mortals distinguished chiefly for their expertness in diving. From seeing them sporting boldly on the

surface of the water, sinking and reappearing after a long time at great distances, the vulgar might come to consider them supernatural beings, at home equally on the sea and the dry land. On this hypothesis the story of Glaucus is explained naturally. Glaucus was enamoured of the nymph Scylla, and was himself beloved by Circe the enchantress. But the latter, jealous of her rival, changed her into a gigantic rock of a semi-human shape; and as for Glaucus, she made him drink a poisoned draught. In his wanderings over the sea, he had observed certain herbs which the fishes ate in order to restore sinking vitality. He attempted the experiment himself, but he was dragged down to the bottom of the sea by the nereids, and changed into a sea-god. Now, Glaucus during his human existence had been a most expert diver, and used to pass between the enchantress and the nymph—or, to speak without figure —between the coasts of Italy, where Circe dwelt, to that of Sicily, by plunging into the sea, to the spot where raged the whirlpool of Scylla. Near this dangerous passage, on the opposite coast, was another gulf named Charybdis. These classic spots, which are not at all formidable in the present day, were in antiquity the terror of navigators, whence the proverb, "To fall from Charybdis into Scylla." To plunge into these furious waters seemed in the eyes of the ancients a feat of the most daring kind, and Glaucus, who often performed it, no doubt at last owed his death to it.

Such was also the fate of another celebrated diver, who perished in this region at a later period, a Sicilian who lived at the end of the fifteenth century, and was named Nicolas. He was styled *the fish*, on account of his ability to exist under water for an extraordinary length of time—four or

five days at a time, they said, with a noble contempt for probability—feeding all the while on herbs and raw fish. His trade was to fish up coral and oysters from the depths of the sea; and he was useful also in carrying despatches under water in a leathern bag. The King of Sicily having heard of his powers, wished to see him, and commanded him to dive not far from the promontory of Cape Faro into the gulf of Charybdis in order to ascertain the depth. As Nicolas hesitated, the king threw into the whirlpool a cup of gold, which the diver was so fortunate as to recover, and which he kept as his reward. He told the king of the marvellous rocks, the plants, and sea-animals which he had seen at the bottom of the waters, and added that he would not attempt the feat a second time. The king threw another golden cup into the sea; and the diver, once more tempted, again sprang, but was never more seen. Charybdis justified its ancient reputation, and did not give back its prey.

The history of Nicolas—who appears to have had organs of respiration of a peculiar kind—Schiller has made the basis of his beautiful ballad "The Diver," but for the purpose of heightening the effect has introduced a love episode.

In our own times, an ingenious machine—the diving bell—fulfils its purpose very well, and the art of Scyllias is no longer what it was in antiquity. The use of machinery tends more and more to replace individual action. But the ancients were not without some idea of the diving-bell; for we read in the "Book of Problems," that one means of giving divers the power of breathing under water, is to lower into it a great cauldron or bell of brass, which preserves the air with which he is supplied, and which water does not enter. But it is necessary to take care to sink

the cauldron perpendicularly, and by force; for if it be but a little inclined, all the air escapes. Aristotle speaks of another instrument by which divers received from above such a supply of air as enabled them to remain a long time in the water. He compares this instrument to the trunk of an elephant, which the animal, when crossing a river, holds above his head for the purpose of breathing more freely. This machine consisted, no doubt, of a pipe of leather, which was fitted to a cap of the same material, and which, rising above the surface of the water, supplied the diver with the necessary air.

For purposes of war divers are not now of very great use, for a good electric battery acts with a hundred times more effect than was ever produced by whole detachments in ancient times. What a wondrous discovery that was which was hailed with such joy a few years since!—a torpedo on a new model able to scatter into a thousand pieces the most solid, most heavily plated ships! Every torpedo, however, can do that; the great merit of this one was that all who remain more or less whole, safe, and sound, after the explosion, and save themselves by swimming away on the *débris* of the shattered vessel, would have their vertebral columns seriously damaged or entirely broken by the shock! There, indeed, is a machine which dwarfs the prowess even of the most famous divers of antiquity. Compared with an instrument like this, what were the divers of Alexander, who at the siege of Tyre destroyed, under water, the stupendous embankment of the Macedonians, pulling away the trunks and branches of trees with which the work was consolidated? or those others, who, during the long siege of Byzantium by Septimius Severus, cut the cables of the enemy's ships, and then, by means of ropes, dragged them

away, "so that," says Dion Cassius, "it was singular to see these vessels moving without sails or yards, and as it were by enchantment, into the port of Byzantium?"

We who can make steam and electricity the slaves of our will, are able to laugh at the pitiful condition of the ancient towns, obliged, when pressed by the enemy, to have recourse to diving, whether to carry news, ask for assistance, or obtain provisions.

We see how, during a war between the Lacedæmonians and the Athenians, the inhabitants of a port, when almost starving, were succoured by divers who passed under water from a neighbouring island, carrying with them hides filled with grain and honey, which constitute to the present day the chief nourishment of the people of the country. And, at the siege of Modena, divers penetrated into the town, and departed with armlets of lead, upon which were engraved the despatches to be transmitted. But *ruse* is met by *ruse*, and the enemy on their side used to invent a thousand stratagems for stopping the approach of the divers, and rendering their assistance valueless; as at the siege of Numantia, they stretched cords across the water, and attached to them bells, or they placed on the surface beams armed with sharp and pointed knives which, continually turning with the current, cut down without pity every one who risked himself within their range.

In such cases the diver's art cost him his life, but in others it was the means of preserving it. Thus, among those who were forced to attempt the famous "Leap of Leucadia," such as were fortunate enough to escape uninjured had to thank their knowledge of swimming and diving for the result. The island of Leucadia, on the shores of Acarnania (now called St. Maur, one of the

Ionian group), attracted a number of desperate lovers, who sought to get rid of their passion by throwing themselves into the sea. Some perished, like the unhappy Sappho; others escaped, like the citizen of Buthrotum in Epirus, who threw himself down from the rock four times without sustaining any injury. Upon this escarped promontory stood a temple of Apollo, which the pilots saluted from afar with respect. Every year, on the day sacred to this god, a man condemned to death was brought hither, and, after an expiatory sacrifice, was launched from the rock into the sea below, covered with feathers, and surrounded with birds, who, by using their wings, might retard his descent. Ancient authors say that the fall was not always fatal. Did the criminal escape by swimming and plunging, or by the assistance of boats placed near to help him, it did not matter; it was enough for him that his life was saved, though he was for ever banished from the territory of Leucadia.

## CHAPTER XII.

### GREEK AND SYRIAN DIVERS.

Sponge Fishing on the Coast of Syria.

DESPITE what has already been said, there are certain difficult and delicate industries which do not call for the aid of machinery to supplement human resources. The race of divers, therefore, is not yet extinct, and their skill still finds a pursuit in which it can be exercised. The reader will readily perceive that reference is made to pearl-fishing. Every one knows that these beautiful ornaments are fished up from the bottom of the sea by divers, chiefly in the neighbourhood of Ceylon and in the Persian gulf. This industry has, however, been so often described, that it would be superfluous to dwell upon it.

There exists another kind of fishing very little known—that for sponges—of which we shall speak more in detail. After the Paris Exhibition of 1867, at which was shown the richest collection of sponges ever seen, no one ought to remain in ignorance of the subject.

Do fair readers who watch over their complexions with absorbing care, and who always have upon their toilet tables one of those fine soft velvety articles, ever ask themselves how they are obtained, and whether they belong to the animal or the vegetable kingdom? Without doubt ladies do not trouble their heads with any such problems, any more than when wearing at balls necklaces of pearls

they think of the Indian divers who risked their lives to procure them.

Ought we to class the sponge among the animals of the lowest organisation, the polypi, or among vegetables? The question is one in regard to which science has still left us somewhat in doubt, though it is generally assigned to that portion of the animal kingdom that most nearly approaches to vegetables. It remains, however, a mysterious entity, which we derive from the quarter of the world that is above all mysterious—the East. The best and finest kinds are found on the coasts of Syria; but they are also dived for in the islands of the Greek Archipelago, off the Barbary States, and among the Bahama Islands.

Formerly they were obtained from Egypt, but nowadays this source is closed; and that in the Barbary States will also be soon exhausted. It is even said that all the sponge banks now known must in a short time be worked out, and that the demand will cease to be met by an adequate supply. As the desire for the comforts of life daily spreads through the different strata of society, this article is more and more sought after, but owing to the negligence of the Turkish government, and the unscrupulous greed of the merchants who traffic in them, sponges are rapidly becoming scarcer. Yet they multiply at a great rate—at least we suppose so, for on this point also we are reduced to conjecture—and the rocks, cleared by the divers, are, in the space of two years, again covered with a new crop.

The most beautiful sponges being found in the Syrian seas, it is there that diving is most actively carried on, that the process is most interesting, and that the most famous divers are engaged. The art is confined to the people of the country, for it demands special qualities—bodily vigour,

nimbleness, skill, and courage. Strangers content themselves with trafficking in the commodity when it has been brought to land, leaving the diving a monopoly in the hands of the natives of Syria and Greece, who are accustomed from an early age to this laborious work. The merchants arrive about the month of September from the ports of the Levant, of the Mediterranean coast, in many cases from Marseilles, and even in some from Paris. Among the dealers from the gay capital is one who spends several months every year at Rhodes during the time of the sponge-fishing, and who has himself gone down to the bottom of the sea to ascertain with his own eyes whether he would not make use of the diving-bell, with the view of securing a larger harvest more conveniently and rapidly than by the present method of obtaining the article in which he traffics.

Beyrout, Tripoli, Latakieh, and Batroun in Syria, are the most important seats of the fisheries, and the principal markets for the sale of the article. Fishing commences in June, and terminates in August, though sometimes it is prolonged into September and October, but the best month is July. When it is about to begin divers assemble from the coasts of Syria and Greece, and the special boats used in the industry are got ready. The divers divide themselves into crews of five or six men, a crew to every boat, each commanded by a *reis*. At the Paris Exhibition one of the boats, named *Scaphi*, used by the Arab divers, was on view. They push on in the morning to the distance of four and a half or five miles from the shore, for here the sponges are to be found on the banks of rock, formed by the *débris* of mollusks. The fishers now look out for a favourable spot, which, on account of the state of the sea, it is not always

easy to find, for if the surface is too agitated to enable them to see to a certain depth, the work must be given up for that day. When, on the other hand, the weather is suitable, and the bank explored rich in sponges, the sails are furled, the anchor thrown, and the divers descend in turn. They tear the sponges from the submarine rocks, and deposit them in nets which cover their breasts. They collect as many as possible at a time, and when they feel obliged to mount to the surface to breathe, they shake the rope by which they have descended into the sea. This rope is weighted by a large stone, which is a sort of anchor of safety to these poor wretches. The depths at which sponges are met with are various. The species found in shallow waters are generally of inferior quality, and to get the finest it is necessary to dive to an enormous depth.

In the last case the operation is very difficult, and of course it is on this account that the fine sponges are so dear, though they are, strange to say, much more numerous than the coarse ones. It is said that a boat will return in the evening with only eight or ten sponges, but this must certainly mean pieces of the very finest quality. The common qualities are sometimes torn off the rocks very easily, by means of three-forked harpoons, attached to long rods. These sponges grow under very thick bunches of weeds, and to obtain them it is necessary to wait till the squalls of the winter season have dragged away these parasites. Only then, and when the sea is calm, is it possible to see to the bottom of the waters to make choice of a suitable spot by which to seize the sponge by the point at which it adheres to the rock, without running the risk of tearing it. On the other hand, with respect to fine sponges, the harpoon cannot be used without the risk of destroying the article, and it

is in this case that the skill of the diver becomes indispensable.

Latakieh, so celebrated for its fine tobacco, deserves to be no less known and appreciated for the excellent quality of its sponges. The divers of that region are a peculiar race, living for the most part on the little island of Ruad, not far from the Gulf of Antioch. Although their life is a hard one, full of struggles and privations, they are robust and courageous. It is difficult to conceive how they can remain such a length of time under water. When they fall upon a rich sponge-bed they stick to their prey, and do not leave it until absolutely compelled. Then they rise to the surface in the last state of fatigue, out of breath, and with the blood flowing from the mouth, the nose, the ears, and even the eyes. Some abuse their powers so much that they die of their exertions and loss of blood. The divers of Latakieh are quite amphibious; the children, when they reach a certain age, assist their parents; the other younger ones remain at home with their mothers, and these form the only inhabitants of the Isle of Ruad during several months of the summer. The most favourable period for diving is the months of July and August, when the climate of the north of Syria is delicious. The waves then roll softly over the breast of the ocean, no sudden gusts or deceitful squalls interrupting their slow and regular march. It is charming to watch at dawn the fleet of little boats, with their white sails standing out clear against the blue horizon, skimming the waves with wonderful rapidity, and hardly touching their crests; and then, when they have reached the proper fishing ground, to see the men throwing ropes from boat to boat, and fastening them together in a movable cordon, within which the divers ply their trade.

The commencement of the fishing season is celebrated

in the Island of Ruad with joyous fêtes. The people, though under the government of the Turks, live happily, and administer their own affairs, placing the authority of the community in the hands of their old men and sages. Other rejoicings take place at the close of the season, and are all the more animated if it has been a successful one. In the winter the divers rest from all labour, sit with their legs crossed smoking their pipes, while their boats and appliances for sponge-fishing are laid up in a place of safety.

Our account of sponge-fishing would not be complete if we omitted to make mention of the history of the sponge after it is brought from the sea by the diver. Before being sent to market it undergoes various processes of preparation. As soon as the boat comes to shore a trough is dug in the sand and filled with water, and the sponges having been thrown into it the men trample them with their feet in order to free them from their sticky gelatinous coating. But there still remains a great deal of sand, which the divers do not care to remove entirely, because, as they sell their sponges by the weight, the heavier their goods are the better for them. The purchasers, however, are not less cunning than the sellers, and do not definitely conclude their bargain until two or three days have passed, during which time the sponges are left to dry. It is only inexperienced buyers that are caught in the trap. After this the sponge is marketable, and if it is a piece that has been dived for and not caught with the harpoon, if it has come from Syria, if it is of the fine soft quality, if its colour is a pale yellow, its shape that of a cup, round on all sides, its consistency velvety, it is certain to find its way to the boudoirs of the rich, the elegant, and the delicate, who will not grudge to pay for it as much as four or even six guineas.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### SKATING AND SKATERS.

The Inventor of the Skate—Amusements of the Londoners—German Skaters—The Poet Klopstock's Love of the Exercise—Goëthe Cures his Heart-ache by Skating—What He Thinks of the Art—The Skate in Holland in Former and in the Present Times—Races of Female Skaters in Friesland — Regiment of Scandinavian Skaters — English Riflemen — Episode of the Winter of 1806 — Figure Made on the Ice with Skates.

HAPPY are the climates in which the diver can at all seasons of the year descend to the bottom of the waters. But under less favoured skies the severity of the season is accompanied by a difference in the habits, pleasures, and exercises of the inhabitants. Winter comes with its frosts, the rivers are fixed in their channels, and the skater takes possession of the watery domain elsewhere explored by the diver. It is impossible to name the inventor of the skate, but it is one of those inventions for which no one has a right to claim priority. Want, imperious want, called it into existence, and the only question that remains is who improved it? In this age of ours the skate is a beautifully-finished article, but originally it consisted simply of the jawbone of an animal—a horse or a cow—so fashioned as to glide easily over the ice. A pair of these primitive skates are still to be seen in the British Museum, and others are occasionally dug up at Moorfields and Finsbury, in which districts, now resounding with the roll of waggons, drays, and carriages, the youth of

London used to enjoy themselves during the frosts of winter. "When," says Fitzstephen, "the great fenne or moor (which watereth the walls of the citie on the north side) is frozen, many young men play upon the yce. Some, striding as wide as they may, doe slide swiftly; some tye bones to their feet and under their bootes, and, shoving themselves by a little picked staffe, doe slide as swiftly as a birde flyeth in the air, or an arrow out of a crosse-bow." The staff referred to served a double end; it was mainly used for support, but it was often employed as a weapon of offence and defence.

The modern skater is in a different position; he does not walk on the ice with the means of support constantly at hand. He launches himself upon it, and flies over it, executing marvels of skill and agility. Amateur skaters abound in Germany, who, while moving over the ice at a great pace, can suddenly leap from it a distance of two yards, and clear two or three hats placed one above the other, or even the little sledges which some of the ladies use. Baron de Brincken, formerly page to the King of Westphalia, accomplished the feats of which we have spoken. The northern countries of Europe, as can well be understood, furnish the greatest adepts, and in Germany, in particular, there are many graceful skaters.

The author of the "Messiah," Klopstock, was an enthusiastic lover of skating, even in his old age. At Altona he has been seen skimming over the ice for many hours at the time, attempting to call back that warmth of blood which age and inactivity had chilled. And not only was he an ardent admirer of this sport, but he tried to proselytise in its interest, and wrote fiery lyrics in its praise. Germany laughed a little at such enthusiasm, and asked, "What! the

author of 'Messiah' linger over pleasures that are no longer suitable to his age?" But when Klopstock and Goëthe met for the first time, the one's sun about to set, the glory of the other just bursting over the world, what was the subject of their conversation? Literature, poetry, æsthetics? Not at all. The conversation turned upon the art with which they were familiar, and thanks to which we fly over the hard crystallised water on winged feet, like those of the Homeric gods.

It is said that Goëthe, who never skated in his boyhood, fell in love with the exercise under peculiar circumstances. The poet had ceased to visit Frederica, of Sesenheim—that incident which has puzzled so many readers of the "Autobiography." The love-link was broken, and the poet is believed to have deeply regretted the step he had taken. Discontented with himself, tormenting himself with reproaches, which even his greatest admirers must think were more than deserved, Goëthe knew not how to banish the phantoms that beset him. In severe bodily exercise he sought relief from the annoyances of embittered memory. A new wandering Jew, he passed from Frankfort to Darmstadt, from Darmstadt to Frankfort, in the midst of wind and tempest, singing his "Wanderers' Sturmlied," while the storm was beating in his face. But though he wearied himself out with these marches and counter-marches, nothing could calm the trouble of his spirit. If he sought a change in riding, black care mounted behind, and rode with him. At last, his friends attracted him to the ice, and taught him to skate. The poet was a persevering and enthusiastic student of the art whose praises Klopstock sang. This new employment gave a change to the current of his ideas, and had a beneficial effect upon his moral nature.

He felt that it was to Klopstock that he owed, however indirectly, the salutary transformation that he had undergone, and one morning in December, when the frost was hard and clear, he jumped out of bed, and putting on his skates, recited, as if he were inspired, one of the verses of the poet.

Goëthe's enjoyment during his first skating winters was fondly recalled to the last, and in writing his wonderful "Autobiography," he speaks of his favourite exercise with an enthusiasm which age could not repress. "It is with good reason," he exclaims, "that Klopstock has praised this employment of our physical powers, which brings us in contact with the happy activity of childhood, which urges youth to exert all its suppleness and agility, and which tends to drive away the inertia of age. We give ourselves up to this pleasure with happy abandonment. A whole day passed upon the ice does not satisfy us, and we prolong the amusement far into the night. While other exercises, indulged in for an unusual length of time, weary the body, this one only seems to increase its suppleness and vigour.

"The moon coming forth from the bosom of the clouds, and shining with mild radiance over the snow covered fields, the night wind that sighs as we cut quickly through it, the cracking of the ice beneath our feet, our flying movements —all suggest the savage majesty of the scenes of Ossian. We declaim after each other one of Klopstock's odes, and when we meet together at night, we make the air resound with our praises of the poet whose genius has lent a grace to the pleasures of the ice. Like the young men who in spite of the development of their intellectual faculties, forget everything for the simple games of youth, as soon

as they have once recovered the taste for them, we seem, when skating, to lose entirely any consciousness of the most serious objects that claim our attention. It was while abandoning myself to these aimless movements that the most noble aspirations, which had too long lain dormant within me, were re-awakened, and I owe to these hours, which seemed lost, the most rapid and successful development of my poetical projects."

In Holland the taste for skating is even more fully developed than in Germany. In winter, the Dutch merchants adopt this method of conveying their commodities to market, and as they skim along their frozen canals, some amuse themselves by knitting, others smoke, and all carry on their head the hampers that contain their wares.

In one of the most interesting provinces of the country (Friesland) skating races take place in almost all the towns. Indeed, this province could not be inhabited if the art were unknown, for the people would then be confined within doors during several months of every year. Thus, to the Frieslanders skating is less an amusement than a necessity, and both sexes actually skate more than they walk. No sooner can an infant keep himself on his legs than the irons are fastened to his boots, and his parents lead him on the ice, and teach him to use them. At six years of age the young skater has attained great proficiency, and moves with rapidity and elegance; but it is only between the ages of twenty and thirty that he becomes a consummate artist; and from this period he continues to practise the exercise until he reaches extreme old age. The peasants have a heavy and awkward appearance when they are trudging along the road or labouring in the fields in summer time; but in winter, when their skates are on their

feet, and their canals have become glittering roads of ice, the grace and velocity of their movements as they glide along are most surprising.

Winter, which everywhere benumbs the limbs and renders men inactive in disposition, has the exactly opposite effect in Holland, enlivening the people, bringing them into the open air, and putting them in good humour. Indeed, the transformation is so striking that it astonishes all strangers. Pilati, the author of "Letters on Holland (the Hague, 1780)," makes mention of this singular phenomenon as early as the eighteenth century. He wonders at the metamorphosis produced by the frost upon the *physique* of the inhabitants. "Heavy, massive, stiff creatures during the rest of the year become suddenly active, ready, and agile, as soon as the canals are frozen." Travellers speculate upon the reason of the change, and ask whether it is that in winter the sun drawing forth from the earth none of the fogs and vapours which its beams cause to ascend in summer, the air is purer and more elastic. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that the people who creep about heavily in the fine weather, betake themselves suddenly, as soon as the snow covers the ground and the waters are bounded by the frost, to running, leaping, and dancing upon the ice. The citizens then travel from town to town, and even from province to province, with a celerity which contrasts strangely with their immobility during the warm weather. In the eighteenth century, the most expert skaters could go from Leyden to Amsterdam—a distance of fifteen miles—in an hour and a quarter, a feat which put the coach or carriage fairly to shame. In a work which dates from this time, "The Delights of Holland" (Amst., 1697), the case is mentioned of a father

who travelled more than 120 leagues in one day in order to reach his son, who was in danger of death. Another person laid a wager that he would go three leagues on the ice more rapidly than the other would get over a league and a half on horseback, but the bet was declined. "The Hollanders," says the same author, "are like the birds of the air; they spend more time in flying than in walking." They could move so steadily on their skates that they carried baskets of eggs on their arms while going at their highest speed without breaking one.

And the children! These lumpish, chubby-faced little Dutchmen—who when playing on the ground in summer time will not put themselves out of the way to let a carriage pass, preferring to run the chance of being crushed beneath the wheels to being at the trouble of moving—what marvellous activity do they now show on the frozen canals! Pilati, to whom we have already referred, remarks, "The races on the ice are the carnivals of the Dutch; they are their fêtes, their operas, their dissipations. At this season, during which many fashionable people in different parts of the world are ruining themselves by their extravagance, the only expense to which the Hollanders are put is the cost of a pair of skates, and the outlay is called for only once or twice during their lives."

At the present day the inhabitants of Friesland exhibit the same peculiarity. Any one who has been among them in the warm season, should visit them during winter, and see their skate-races, which take place upon the large canals by which the country is cut up in every direction. Long strips of wood ranged in line are placed upon the ice to keep the competitors separate, for otherwise in the heat of the contest each might be tempted to spoil

SKATING RACES IN HOLLAND.

the chances of the others by running across their path. The course being sometimes more favourable to swift progress on the one side of this demarcation than on the other, the skaters are bound every time they turn to change the side. The lists are closed at the two extremities by ropes which run round by the sides of the canal, and along which there is always a multitude of excited spectators. The prizes consist of articles of considerable value, but to obtain them it is necessary to have been victorious in from sixty to eighty heats.

The races in which females alone are competitors are more interesting than those which are confined to men. The youth of the locality contend for the honour of attaching the skates to the feet of their female friends, and the fortunate swain who is allowed to perform this office is rewarded with a kiss. If these Atalantas of the north have not the strength of the men they have more grace; they do not equal their masculine rivals in speed, but they excel them in lightness and in beauty of style.

In northern countries skates have long been employed in the execution of military evolutions. The ground being for a considerable portion of the year thickly covered with snow, it has been found necessary that the troops, or at least certain corps, should be provided with skates to enable them to practise the exercises and manœuvres which could not, during the cold season, be performed without them. The soldiers of Holland go through all the evolutions of the military art upon the ice, but it is in Norway that it has been considered necessary to embody a special corps, known as the "regiment of skaters." The men are furnished with the skates in ordinary use in the north, that fixed on the right foot being somewhat longer than that on

the left. Furnished with these the soldiers descend steep slopes with incredible rapidity, re-ascend them as quickly, cross rivers and lakes, and halt at the slightest signal, even while moving at the highest speed. To assist them in stopping thus instantaneously they have a long staff, shod with iron, similar to that used by travellers in Switzerland and the Pyrenees, to assist them in clambering up the glaciers and steep peaks. This staff, which sinks deep into the snow, is of great assistance to the regiment of skaters, and is used by them in all their manœuvres, whether in setting out on the march, or quickening or slackening their pace. It is also used to steady the men, and give them support when they are taking aim and firing. The accoutrements of these men are simple. The weapons are a light musket, suspended by a shoulder-belt, and a sword bayonet. But they manage these, and perform all their evolutions on the ice with a dexterity which astonishes strangers.

"It is not," says Blaine, in his "History of Field Sports," "in Holland, Germany, Russia, and America only that skating is used as a great agent both of personal communication between distant localities, and of transmitting the necessaries of life from place to place. On the contrary, in the fenny districts of Lincoln, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, &c., when the vast floodings have become frozen, and left only a broad expanse of ice far as the eye can reach, it is equally available, and almost as usefully employed as in northern climes. At such times, when not only all means of conveying the products of life from one locality to another, but also those of personal transit are extremely difficult to command, then is it that the skate is called into requisition, and the wearers set off at railway speed from one town to another, either on business or for

pleasure, and ere they return have probably accomplished fifty or sixty miles with little fatigue, and, when pressed for time, have done it in a very few hours. Some of them have been known to skate forty miles considerably within three hours. Nor is this all: on the contrary, being skate mounted, the traders are able, and often are seen, to push before them small sledges, or boat-shaped lockers, laden with wares of every description, from town to town."

During the early winter of 1806, after the battle of Jena, Maréchal Mortier received an order from the Emperor to make himself master, without delay, of the Hanseatic towns. The officer charged with the transmission of this order found himself at the mouth of the Elbe, which he required to pass, and which at this point is seven and a half miles wide. The question was to find a bridge, for without one a detour of twenty-two miles would have to be made up the one bank of the river and down the other before he could reach the point opposite to that at which he found himself. But the officer, knowing that time was precious, did not hesitate to adopt a resolution, which might, if unsuccessfully carried out, prove fatal to him. He procured skates, and rapidly passed from bank to bank of the newly-frozen river. His ingenuity and boldness in taking this course enabled him to deliver his despatch six hours sooner than he possibly could have done by the ordinary route.

In speaking of skating it would be unpardonable to omit reference to feats of skill, which consist in tracing figures with the iron of the skate, and which are always considered among the most marvellous of the skater's exhibitions of his art. A certain Swede is mentioned, who, borne upon his skates as on wings, designed with one foot

a number of portraits, which, though not distinguished for photographic accuracy, were remarkable for the purity and neatness of the lines. We are also assured of the authenticity of a still more extraordinary feat. A young lady accepted a challenge to a correspondence upon the ice, and in a few minutes a question and answer were written down with an elegance unsurpassed by handwriting upon glass with a diamond. The famous Chevalier de St. George, who was marvellously expert in all exercises of the body, was, it is said, one of those who signed his name upon the ice with the blade of his skate. Strutt mentions that he had seen on the ice in Hyde Park four skaters dance a minuet with as much elegance as if they had been walking on the floor of a ball-room; while others whirled and manœuvred with wonderful cleverness, tracing upon the ice the letters of the alphabet one after the other. Many other statements as to wonderful achievements in this way might be quoted, but the majority are of a very apocryphal character. The ordinary figures are, however, accomplished by expert skaters with ease, and though the range is limited, most of them show the art in its most graceful developments.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE STILTS.

**Stilts** in favour at the Court of Burgundy—Stilt Battle at Namur—A Poem on Stilts—The "Landes" of Gascony—Crossing of the Niagara.

THE custom of walking with stilts dates from the earliest times, and in this, as in all the other branches of art, there have been many distinguished professors, of whose names history, certainly, has not taken notice, but who, nevertheless, have achieved a remarkable degree of proficiency, if it be true that many of them danced upon the tight-rope like the regular acrobats. Manuscripts of the middle ages have engravings representing men engaged in this exercise, which was in high favour at the court of Burgundy. In the accounts of the steward of Lille for the year 1516, on the occasion of the entry of the King of Spain, afterwards Charles V., into that town, there figures a sum of "VI sols (ancient French coins) given to a man who walked upon high stilts, and followed the court carrying a banner."

At Namur, in former times, combats in which the contests were carried on by men wearing stilts used to take place. It is to be remembered that at this town, which was subject to the periodical overflow of the waters of the Sambre and the Meuse, the use of stilts was at one time a necessity, by means of which the inhabitants were able to pass from street to street, and from district to district. Without stilts such communication between the different

quarters was impossible at certain seasons of the year, and the practice, which was at one time a necessity, became afterwards an amusement. A number of popular fêtes were formerly celebrated at Namur, and were encouraged by the courts of the province for the purpose of developing the strength, skill, and agility of the people. Among the games reference may be made to one which was called the "Dance of the Seven Maccabees," peculiar to Namur, and which was executed to the sound of the tambour, each performer holding his neighbour's sword-point. To these games stilt-combats were in the course of time added. The struggle was maintained between the inhabitants of the old town and the new, called respectively the *Melans* and the *Avresses*. Five or six hundred young men divided into two opposing bands, formed into brigades, and wearing costumes of different colours, advanced against each other, mounted upon stilts about four feet high. The onset, which was made to the sound of military instruments—fifes, cymbals, and trumpets—took place in the great square opposite the town hall. The two parties were ranged in regular order of battle, the front line consisting of the most formidable and skilful stilt-walkers, to sustain the first shock of the *mêlée*, while a corps of reserve was at hand to succour any point threatened with defeat. The combatants carried no weapons—it was against the rule to do so then—but they had their elbows and their stilts, by the vigorous use of which they did their best to place their enemies *hors de combat*.

The *croc-en-jambe*, or blow behind the knee, of which we have already spoken, was permissible, was indeed the great *coup* in this kind of combat, and was delivered by every combatant as often as possible. And this was not seldom,

BATTLE ON STILTS AT NAMUR. (EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.)

for the Namurois of the Middle Ages, like the Bretons of the present time, were famous in the art of wrestling. Among the ancients this expedient was also common, and in their matches it was most important to master the leg of an opponent. Thus Plautus in one of his pieces, "The Pseudolus," in speaking of wine, says, "It is a dangerous wrestler, for it at once attacks the legs." The Romans also were accomplished in this exercise. Once, when following their enemies upon the frozen Danube, they threw their bucklers on the ice, and planting one foot on the shield, which afforded a sufficiently unyielding surface, they applied the other foot with such vigour to the legs of their adversaries, that they were obliged to fly, leaving many of their number dead behind them.

The stilt struggle often lasted for two hours, the combatants swaying from side to side, advancing, retreating, crouching towards the earth, or leaping up with a bound to avoid a well-aimed blow. But the special feature of the fight was the presence of women in the midst of the fray. Did they come there, like the Sabine women, to separate the combatants, or to take part in the fight? Neither the one nor the other. The mothers, sisters, and wives of those engaged followed their champions to the field of battle, and, like the women among the ancient Germans, though not taking an active part in the contest, they animated their party by their gestures, cries, and presence. When the combatants by whose side they walked were thrown down, they assisted them to mount their stilts, or caught them as they fell, lest they should strike their heads against the pavement. On these occasions the battle was hot and furious, but did not by any means necessarily result in the death of those who engaged in it. As long as it

lasted the flags of the rival factions floated from the windows of the town hall, and did not a little to inflame the minds of the factions.

At Venice in the Middle Ages, at the celebration of the *Guerra dei Pugni*, which we have already mentioned, the women acted a part similar to that played by the ladies of Namur. They appeared in the field, and excited the combatants by their presence, cries, and gestures. In a curious *brochure* of the seventeenth century, written in Latin, examples are given of the inspiriting shouts of these Venetian women. "We are here, dear husbands," they cried. "Would to Heaven it was permitted us to be present at this battle otherwise than as spectators! But modesty and our sex forbid us, though fear does not restrain us. Ah! if we could only fire you with our ardour, and if you could in exchange lend us a little of your strength! What wait you for? Forward, dear ones, and bear off the victory!"

Stilt-fights formed one of the liveliest amusements of Namur. They took place during the fêtes of the Carnival, and on other great occasions, such as the passing through the city of sovereigns or princes whom the inhabitants desired specially to honour. Thus the Maréchal Saxe was in 1748 entertained with one of these tourneys. No doubt the combatants showed the greatest ardour on this occasion, for Maurice said, "If two armies engaged showed as much ferocity as the youths of Namur, it would not be only a battle but a butchery."

From one of these stilt-fights the Namurois won a privilege, the importance of which they have never ceased to appreciate. The Archduke Albert of Austria, at his entrance into the Low Countries, was greeted by the

Governor of Namur, who promised to bring before him "two troops of warriors, who, without being either on foot or on horseback, would afford him the spectacle of a new mode of fighting;" and the Archduke was so much charmed with the exhibition, that he accorded to the inhabitants of the town the privilege of being exempt perpetually from the duties on beer!

Bonnet states that he saw in Holland, in the seventeenth century, "a Chinese who was mounted upon stilts as high as the roofs of the houses, and who went about in this fashion announcing to the town the games in which his *troupe* were about to take part."

In France the *Landes* of Gascony are the classic ground of the stilts, without which the inhabitants could not traverse their vast plains. The nature of the soil does not permit of the passage of water, which consequently sinks and forms standing pools and marshes several feet deep, and utterly impracticable to the pedestrian. It is also necessary that the Landes shepherds should be sufficiently highly perched in order to be able to survey their flocks, scattered among the heath and brushwood. These people mount early in the morning, and do not quit their elevated position till the evening.

In order to get upon their stilts they climb up to a very high mantelpiece, or the roof of a stable, or the window of a house. The stilts are furnished with rests like stirrups for the feet, and the lower ends are shod with bone, to keep the wood from being worn down or broken by the stones. They are attached to the thigh, but in such a way as to permit the knees being freely bent. Every peasant is provided besides with a long pole, which he uses for climbing up to his position, and for support when he wishes

to rest. Thus mounted, the shepherds of the Landes move with wonderful agility, clearing hedges and wide ditches without difficulty. Sometimes, in the provinces of the South of France races on stilts are held, in which women take part.

In 1808, when Napoleon was at Bayonne, the inhabitants gave a specimen of their accomplishments to the Empress Josephine and her attendants. With their "seven-leagued boots" they traversed the town in a few steps. The ladies of the Court, sitting at the windows, threw them money, which they picked up while running, without descending from their perches. From time to time they seated themselves on the earth, then suddenly sprang up to their full height without any other help than that of their long poles. But all these wonders dwarfed before the achievement of a Yankee of Stonington (Connecticut), who wagered he would traverse the rapids of Niagara upon stilts, and who kept his word on the 12th of March, 1859.

# BOOK III.

## SKILL OF THE EYE AND HAND.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE SLING AND ITS USE.

Missile Weapons not highly esteemed by the Ancients—The Sling in the Holy Scriptures—The Inhabitants of the Balearic Isles: how they trained Children to this Exercise—Projectiles found in the Plain of Marathon—The Slinger and Trajan's Column.

How is it that the ancients, who in the Olympic Games gave prizes for throwing the discus and the javelin, did not incorporate among their games of skill that of shooting with the bow? Is it more honourable to plant a javelin in a target than to strike the same target with an arrow? The chief reason for the exclusion was that the bow, considered with respect to its nature and its uses, was not held in high esteem by the ancients. There was no protection against its shots, and with it one could, without risk to himself, wound an adversary from a distance. In such a case, then, what was the use of strength and courage, seeing that, when all were armed with bow and arrow, the most cowardly were put on a level with the bravest? The use of such weapons ran quite counter to the ideas of the ancients, and to those methods of combat, face to face

and hand to hand, which placed personal bravery in so prominent a position. While the Greek or Trojan warrior advanced across the plain before the eyes of gods and men, alone, strong only in his valour, and without other arms than the sword and spear, the archer crouched behind a wall or rampart of bucklers, and from this secure hiding-place spread death among the ranks of the enemy. At the siege of Troy, Teucer, the famous archer, cowered under the broad buckler of Ajax, and from this hiding-place shot down a multitude of brave warriors. "Every time that Ajax raised his buckler," says the Greek poet, "Teucer, taking aim, discharged his arrows into the mêlée, and those whom he struck fell, never to rise again. But immediately after shooting the archer took refuge again with Ajax, like an infant in its mother's breast; and the son of Telamon covered him with his powerful ægis." From this it is easy to understand how the ancient heroes had so low an opinion of the weapon of long range.

We remark also in the same poet with what contempt the valiant Diomedes addresses Paris, who had shot an arrow at him, and who, to do this the more safely, had taken shelter behind a tombstone. "Wretched archer," cried the warrior, "you who boast of your curled hair, and who think of nothing but women, if you dare to attack me armed only with my fist, face to face, your bow and your numerous arrows would not save you. You plume yourself too much in having grazed my foot. I am no more disturbed by my wound than I should be by the stroke of a woman's hand or by that of a weak infant. The arrows of a warrior who has neither strength nor skill do no harm. But such is not the case with the weapons thrown by my hands. Evil is his fate who feels

the point of my javelin; his wife will beat her face; his children will be orphans; and his body will rot upon the ground which has been reddened with his blood. More vultures than women will crowd around him." The warrior of the olden time, in danger of receiving a treacherous arrow, had the same contempt for the bow and the archers which the knights of the Middle Ages, burdened with their armour, might have felt for fire-arms in the first years of the use of gunpowder.

It must not, however, be concluded from what we have said that the bow was regarded as a vile and contemptible weapon, not worthy to be used by free men. Even the most disdainful were forced to own that it was an advance upon earlier inventions, among them the sling, which itself was an improvement on the stone thrown by the hand.

The Sling in Action.

The sling is a weapon made of cord or of hide, at the end of which a stone more or less heavy is placed, to be thrown to a distance. It is unnecessary to describe an instrument which is a plaything in the hands of every schoolboy, but it may be stated that its principle is the bringing into play of centrifugal force. The stone, swung round in the sling, tends to fly off at a tangent, and tightens the sling with an intensity which is proportionate to the centrifugal force; but it is held back by the hand, which in whirling round the sling restrains the flight of the charge it contains. The stone escapes at a tangent the instant the hand ceases to act.

The inhabitants of Palestine made use in very ancient times of this dangerous weapon, the most skilful in its use being the tribe of Benjamin, whose boast it was never

to miss their aim (Judges xx. 16). What makes their skill appear more surprising still was that they managed the sling with the left hand. The men who came to David's help at Ziklag were no less adroit; they used at will either the right hand or the left. David was worthy of such allies, as is proved by his victory over the giant Goliath, whom he brought to the earth with a pebble shot in this way. The sling seems to have been in ancient times the favourite weapon of shepherds, who with it drove away wild beasts preying on their flocks. David's skill is therefore the less surprising, for no doubt he had great practice in the use of this instrument while guarding his father's sheep.

It has been asserted that the Asiatic nations excelled all Europeans in the management of the sling; but this is not warranted, at least in the case of the inhabitants of the Balearic Isles, whose wonderful skill has passed into a proverb. They threw more murderous projectiles with their slings than with any other discharging weapon, making use of them even in attacking towns, and with the stones which they hurled from them in pitched battles breaking even the bucklers, helmets, and javelins of their enemies. "These natives have such a skill of hand," says Diodorus of Sicily, "that it very rarely happens that they miss their aim. What makes them so great in the use of the sling is the training given them from their earliest years by their mothers, who set up a piece of bread hung at the end of a rod as a target, and let their children remain without food until they have hit it, when they receive it as the reward of their skill and patience."

The slings of the inhabitants of the Balearic Isles were made of a piece of rush or cane. Each man usually

possessed three, of different lengths, corresponding with the distances to which the stone was to be thrown. The slings used by other nations were made of hide or plaited cord. The Greeks employed three thongs; among others the instrument was made of one only. It was not known in Greece in the earliest times, and is not mentioned by Homer. At a later period the Acarnanians were considered the most skilful slingers of Greece; next came the Achaians, especially those of Ægium, of Patræ, and of Dyme. The weapon was used to throw not only stones but balls of lead, and in some localities, especially in the Plain of Marathon, many of these projectiles of metal have been found. These relics are interesting from the inscriptions and devices which are cut upon them, and which consist of the names of persons and appropriate epithets, the legend in many cases meaning, when freely translated, "Look out!"

The soldiers always carried with them a supply of these projectiles in a fold of their tunic, which formed a sort of bag, as may be seen in the ancient sculptures. The bas-reliefs of Trajan's Column exhibit a slinger of the Roman army, some German auxiliary, having his *pallium* supplied with projectiles, his sling in his hand, his arm extended to brandish his weapon above his head. The Romans maintained troops of slingers, who, like the archers, harassed the enemy with volleys of stones and bullets, and as soon as their position became serious, fell back into the rear. The range of these slings is said to have been 600 Roman feet.

The French and English armies also in early times included slingers, who were retained even after the invention of gunpowder, and the Spaniards made use of the

instrument down to the middle of the fourteenth century. I doubt if these slingers would have had any chance with the people mentioned by Aristotle, who, when they saw a flock of birds passing above their heads, arranged among themselves for the turns of bringing them down, each one fixing upon a particular bird as his mark, so certain were they of not missing them.

In the course of time the sling changed its form, and ceased to be itself held in the hand. The English began to attach it to a solid piece of wood, which the slinger held in his two hands.

It may here be remarked that though the inventions of man grow old and disappear before others which more fully meet the wants of the time, they are never entirely lost, but are to be found still existing in remote corners of the globe. It may be said that man cannot allow even the smallest portion of his works to return to nothingness. Thus, the use of the sling is not lost, for at the present day it is practised at the fêtes of certain peoples who inhabit mountainous countries.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BOW IN ANCIENT TIMES.

**The Bow in Asia—The Bow of the Greeks, difficult to lift and wield—Penelope's Suitors—Telemachus—Ulysses' Bow—Others in Virgil—The poor Acestes—An Arrow that takes fire in the Air.**

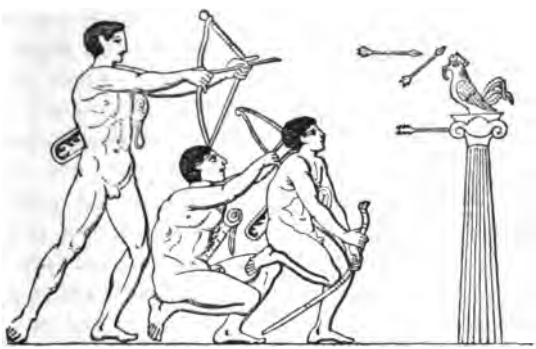
THE bow, like the sling, was originally an Asiatic weapon, or was, at least, more especially characteristic of the peoples of the East than of those of Europe. Almost all the troops of which the army of Xerxes was composed, on the occasion of the invasion of Greece, were, according to Herodotus, furnished with the bow. But the Asiatic bow differed in form from that used in Greece; the first resembled a crescent, the other consisted of two circular parts, or a double crescent joined in the middle. Of the latter shape is the bow described by Homer in the "Iliad," and represented in the ancient sculptures. "Pandarus seized his shining bow," says Homer, "made of the horns of a wild she-goat. The horns, sixteen hands' breadth long, were worked and polished by an able workman, and jointed with gold."

Skill did not alone suffice, as may well be believed, to make a good archer; the first qualification was strength sufficient to bend the bow, by no means an easy task in the Homeric age. Witness the great scene in the "Odyssey," when Ulysses, returning from his wanderings, finds the suitors of Penelope attempting, in every case, though the prize is the hand of the lady, to wield his own enormous bow:—

"Hear me," she cried, "ye noble suitors, who press heavily upon this house to eat and to drink without ceasing, my husband being absent for a long time; nor have ye been able to make any other pretext for your sojourn, but as desiring to marry me, and make me your wife. But come, suitors, since this contest has appeared, for I will put down the great bow of divine Ulysses, and whoever shall most easily stretch the bow in his hands, and shall dart an arrow through the whole twelve rings, him will I follow, leaving this house which I entered as a virgin very beautiful, full of the means of livelihood, which I think I shall sometimes remember, even in a dream." The suitors in vain exerted their utmost strength; the bow of the divine Ulysses was too much for them; and one of them was obliged to say to Melanthius, the goatherd, "Hasten now, light a fire in the palace, and near it place a large seat and skins upon it, and bring out a large roll of suet which is within, that we young men, warming the bow and anointing it with fat, may try it and end the contest." Telemachus, in his turn, tried thrice to bend the bow, but in vain; and Ulysses himself, who having returned to his palace in disguise, seized the bow, tried the string, which, says the poet, "twanged beautifully, like unto a swallow in the voice," and the arrow, at length shot off, went through the centres of all the rings, from the first to the last, and stuck at last in the door of the hall, to the great astonishment of the suitors.

In the "Iliad" mention is made of certain archers who contended for the prize for bird shooting at the games in honour of the death of Patroclus. Achilles caused the mast of a ship to be erected in the sand, at the end of which was attached a cord with a pigeon tied to it. The

two competitors were Teucer and Meriones, and the lot to have the first shot fell to Teucer. "This hero shot a bolt which flew with rapidity, but as he had not promised to sacrifice to Apollo a splendid hecatomb of young lambs, the god prevented him from hitting his mark. The arrow missed the pigeon, but cut the the cord fastened to its feet. The pigeon rose into the air, the cord fell to the earth."



**Shooting with the Bow amongst the Ancients. (From a painted vase in the Naples Museum.)**

Meriones, who stood with his arrow ready, snatched the bow from the hands of Teucer, followed with his eye the pigeon as it rose to the clouds, shot his arrow, and struck the bird under the wing. It fell at Meriones' feet, and he was proclaimed conqueror, amid the plaudits of the whole army.

After the Greek poet, the Latin. Æneas has among the companions of his toils several excellent archers, who give proofs of their skill at the games in honour of the *manes* of Anchises. Virgil, in the fifth book of the "Æneid,"

pits himself against Homer, on whose narrative he tries to improve by speaking of an arrow shot with such force that it takes fire in its flight through the air. Æneas invites to the fête the most skilful archers, to whom he offers prizes; and to the end of the mast of a ship he ties with a thin cord a pigeon, at which the marksmen have to shoot. The competitors, when they have assembled, place their names in a brass vessel, and the first which comes out by lot is that of Hippocoon, the son of Hyrtacus, who is greeted with loud applause. After him came Mnestheus, who had proved so easy a winner in the aquatic contest, and whose head was still encircled with the green palm. The third is Eurytion, and the last Acestes, who does not fear to enter the lists with the young men.

Each with a vigorous hand bends the flexible bow and draws an arrow from the quiver. The first despatched on its mission is that of young Hippocoon; the cord shakes, and the arrow, whirling through the air, strikes the mast, in which it buries itself. The wood trembles, the frightened dove flutters its wings, and the crowd raise shouts of applause. The bold Mnestheus next advances, his bow bent, his mien haughty, his eyes and arrow directed to the living target. He does not, however, succeed in hitting the mark, for he only cuts the cord that confined the pigeon, which at once takes flight towards the black clouds. The impatient Eurytion, who has long been keeping his bow on the stretch, follows with his eyes the course of the bird, which the arrow strikes under the wing, and it falls to the earth, bringing with it the weapon that has killed it. There remains now nothing for Acestes, the last competitor, who has lost the palm simply because there is no target. But the shooting of the others is to be com-

pletely put into the shade, for the arrow which the old man discharges flies through the air with such incredible speed that the feathers with which it is winged take fire, its passage is marked by a train of flame, and at length it is lost in the atmosphere, like the shooting stars, which, flying from the vault of heaven across the sky, drag after them long trains of brilliant light. The spectators look on speechless, and

Archer bending his Bow.
(From a painted vase in the Museum of the Louvre.)

pray to the gods, while Æneas embraces Acestes, loads him with presents, and addresses him thus: "Take these, O old man! for the great god of Olympus by such a portent has shown his desire to raise thee above thy rivals. It is Anchises who rewards thee by my hands; accept this chased bowl, with which the King of Thrace presented my father as a mark of his friendship."

## CHAPTER III.

### THE NATIONS MOST CELEBRATED AS ARCHERS.

**Scythian Archers—Law of the Persians—Cambyses slays an Infant in order to show his Skill as an Archer—The Parthians—They fight only during the Day—Swallows shot on the Wing—The Bow among the Romans—The Horns of the Emperor Domitian—Commodus and his Prowess—Three Arrows shot from the one Bow at the same time—The Greeks and the Crusaders—The Cabôclos of Brazil.**

THE Scythians, the Parthians, the Persians, and the Cretans, are believed to have been the most accomplished archers among the nations of antiquity. The Scythians, according to Plato, shot equally well with the right hand and the left. The kings of Media employed Scythians as instructors in archery, and Cyaxares engaged individuals of this nation to instruct his son in the art. Among the Persians there existed a law which enforced the instruction of all children from the fifth to the twentieth year in three things—first, horsemanship; second, shooting with the bow; third, invariably telling the truth.

Cyrus was from his infancy accustomed to the use of the bow, and Cambyses, his son, was a most expert archer. On one occasion the latter gave a frightful proof of his skill, which was equally an evidence of the cruelty of his disposition. The story is told by Herodotus, who says that, "Prexaspes was the chief ambassador of Cambyses, and his son was the great ruler's cupbearer, a position of much

honour. One day, Cambyses said to Prexaspes, 'Tell me, I pray thee, one thing. What do the Persians think of me? What sort of man am I in their eyes?' 'O king,' answered the ambassador, 'they think highly of thee in all respects except one. They say that you are too much addicted to wine'—a reply which greatly angered his master. 'I understand,' said he, 'the Persians mean that, being too much given to wine, my reason is affected, and I rave. Then what they said of me lately was not the truth?' This question had reference to an incident that had taken place only a short time previously. In a full assembly of the Persians, Crœsus of Lydia being present, Cambyses asked what they thought of him as compared with his father Cyrus, and received for answer that they esteemed him greater than his father, since he not only ruled over all the countries which Cyrus possessed, but had added to them by the conquest of Egypt and the seas. This was the reply of the Persians; but Crœsus, not content with offering such a moderate tribute of esteem, said, 'Son of Cyrus, I do not consider you as great as your father, for you have not yet given us a son equal to him whom he left us!' Delighted with these words, Cambyses praised the judgment of Crœsus.

"Recollecting this incident, what was his rage when he heard Prexaspes say that the Persians thought him a drunkard! 'Decide at once, yourself,' cried he to Prexaspes, 'whether the Persians speak the truth, and whether, in forming such opinions of me, they are acting the part of just and wise men. Behold! I shall shoot at your son, who is now under the portico, and if my arrow strikes him in the centre of the heart, the Persians are fools; on the contrary, if I fail to do so, their talk will have

an appearance of truth, and I am a fool.' So saying, he bent his bow, and, discharging his arrow, Prexaspes' son fell dead in a moment. The king gave orders that the body should be opened on the spot, that the wound might be examined and his skill tested. It was found that the arrow had transfixed the heart. Then the king, smiling with joy, turned to Prexaspes. 'You can see now,' said he, 'that I am not foolish, and that the Persians are mistaken. Tell me, I pray you, have you ever seen any man hit his mark more truly?' Prexaspes, judging that Cambyses had lost his senses, returned an answer which the king no doubt regarded as praise, but which shows that the poor father's heart was broken. 'Master,' said he, 'I do not think that even a god could have shot such a fatal arrow.'"

Cambyses always carried his bow by his side for use when required; for we read in another passage in Herodotus that, displeased with some opinion of his conduct which Crœsus the Lydian had expressed, he suddenly seized his bow to punish his imprudent adviser, who had only time to escape the shaft. His jealousy of his brother Smerdis arose, it is said, from the circumstance that he alone among all the Persians had been able to bend a great bow sent by the King of Ethiopia.

The Parthians were a nation of archers and horsemen. Their army was composed almost entirely of light cavalry, splendidly mounted on horses of incomparable speed, and armed with bows of such astonishing strength as to be capable of sending arrows through the hardest substances. With their arrows they could pierce bucklers and cuirasses, and, as it were, nail the hands of their enemies to their bodies. "They have," says Dion Cassius, "very few infantry, and these are but poor soldiers; but even they

are archers, for every one in this country practises shooting with the bow from his childhood. Their manner of fighting is determined by the nature of the soil and the climate. Their country, which consists in great part of plains, affords endless pasture for horses, and is very suitable for the evolutions of cavalry. In time of war they carry with them great droves of horses to enable them to change their mount whenever they please, to attack with suddenness the most distant points, and to escape with the utmost rapidity. Their sky contains no moisture, and this gives to their bows an invariable strength of tension, except in winter, when they undertake no warlike expedition."

The Parthians not only avoided battle during this season, but they also refused to fight after sunset, as we find from Dion Cassius and Plutarch, though these authors do not give us the reason. At the fall of day the warriors flew upon their swift steeds from the field, perhaps because the abundant dew that fell from the clear sky during the night relaxed and took the elasticity out of their bows. Besides, even in the brightest night, a battle to be decided mainly by successful use of the bow and arrow, could not be conducted with any well-assured hope of victory.

The tactics of the Parthians consisted in out-flanking the enemy, in surrounding him, and having once got him within a circle that gradually closed in upon him, in crushing him under a shower of arrows. And they were never in want of projectiles, for camels laden with ammunition followed the army in the campaign. In order that the flights might tell with greater effect, their custom was to withdraw to a suitable distance from the enemy, and it was this space between the two armies that the Roman soldiers were always anxious to lessen.

In Greece the Cretans were the only people skilled as bowmen. It is known that Philip, king of Macedonia, father of Alexander the Great, was blind of one eye—a defect caused by an arrow shot by a most expert archer of Amphipolis, named Aster, who had conceived an ill-will towards the king because he would not engage him in his service. He came to Philip, offered to join his army, and stated that he was so skilled in the use of the bow that he never failed to hit a swallow on the wing. "Very well," answered Philip, who thought it beneath him to make use of such an auxiliary, "I shall engage you whenever I undertake a war upon swallows." The archer, thus insulted, resolved to be revenged, and it was not long before he found an opportunity. Philip having laid siege to a certain town, Aster smuggled himself into the place, and watched from the ramparts all the movements of his enemy. One day, observing the king advancing at the head of a body of troops towards the gate of the town, he took an arrow which he had inscribed with the words "To the right eye of Philip." The arrow reached its goal. Philip having lost his eye, answered with an arrow bearing the legend, "If the town is taken, Aster will be hanged." It is needless to say that the town was taken, and the archer hanged; but never after this time did Philip allow any one to speak of the blind in his presence.

The Romans did not look upon the bow as a national weapon, and the archers who served in their armies were mercenaries. The emperors, however, did not disdain to practise this exercise; and among others, Domitian, who was not in other respects a lover of arms or of war, took pleasure in shooting with the bow, and excelled in the art. He is known to have practised in his domains, bringing

down hundreds of animals, and amusing himself by making his arrows fly in such a fashion that they stuck in the heads of his prey, one on the right side, another on the left, like natural horns. It was he too, who, having placed a young man some distance from him, with the right hand raised in the air and the fingers spread out, shot with such skill that the arrows passed through the interstices without even grazing the skin.

The Emperor Commodus was still more expert in the use of the bow and arrow. The Parthians and the Moors had taught him, the former to handle these weapons, the latter to throw the javelin. But the pupil far surpassed his masters, who were in ecstasies about his wonderful proficiency; for he never missed his mark, and struck down as many animals as he aimed at. Herodian says that one day he had a hundred lions brought into the arena, and killed them all one after the other with a like number of javelins. The animals were left lying on the sand, that every one might count them at his leisure, and judge for himself of the prowess of the emperor. He ordained public games, and had it proclaimed that he himself would appear in the arena, and in his own person kill all the animals that should be let loose. The announcement attracted people from the whole of Italy into Rome, and on the day appointed multitudes thronged the amphitheatre. Outside the circus was raised a gallery, from which the emperor was to show his skill. At first he practised on stags and deer, and the like, which he despatched from his balcony, and afterwards hurled his javelin against the lions and other ferocious beasts. Never did he aim twice at the same animal, for every one of his strokes was mortal, his weapon striking either on the head or going right to the heart. He

had gathered together for this great *battue* the most rare and extraordinary specimens that had been caught in Ethiopia and the Indies. It was Domitian who first caused to be exhibited at Rome certain species of animals that up to that time had been known only from pictures. Among these were Mauritanian ostriches, which astonished the Romans by the swiftness of their flight, and which Commodus shot from his gallery with arrows having crescent-shaped iron heads. His aim was so exact, that with these broad-headed weapons he literally decapitated every one of the wretched birds, which, by the impulse of their flight, ran on for a brief space headless. At another time, seeing a man in the fearful embrace of a panther, and on the point of being strangled and devoured, the emperor with a single arrow killed the animal without touching the man. This "clever hit" recalls a still more remarkable example of skill, which forms the substance of an epigram of the Greek Anthology. The subject is a father seeing his son in the coils of a serpent, and hesitating between the desire to save his child and the fear of doing him an injury. "Alcon, at the sight of his infant, whom a deadly poisonous serpent held in its embraces, bent his bow with fear and trembling. He did not miss the monster, for the arrow entered the mouth of the serpent a little above the head of the child. Thus the animal was killed, and the father has suspended his bow upon this oak in witness of his good fortune and his skill."

The archers of antiquity shot their arrows to a distance of 574 feet, according to the report of Vegetius, and it has been said that with this light missile they effected a greater destruction of the enemy than did the infantry in the earlier years of the invention of fire-arms.

THE CABOCLOS OF BRAZIL SHOOTING.

The Greeks of the Eastern empire were no less accomplished in shooting with the bow than their ancestors. Zosimus, a historian of the fifteenth century, speaks of an archer named Menelaus, who, with a single bow, shot off three arrows at one and the same instant, all of which struck the different targets at which they were aimed! This seems certainly so very extraordinary a feat, that it is to be feared the writer drew a longer bow than the expert to whom he referred. Among the people of the eastern empire, greater astonishment was excited by the wonderful skill of the crusaders, who shot their arrows with such effect that they pierced the thickest bucklers, and, according to Comninus, sank every part of them in the ramparts of besieged towns. In order to bend their great bows, the archers of those times, lying on their backs, pressing their feet against the wood, drew the cord to the height of their eyes, and shot in this singular attitude.

Certain savage races also shoot in this position. The painter Debret saw in the vicinity of the town of San Pedro de Cantagallo (Brazil) a number of Indians who shot their arrows in this manner with surprising skill. Among their other performances the author mentioned that each chose the smallest of his bows, and sat down on the ground in the middle of a little circle that had been previously drawn. Then suddenly springing to his feet, he shot the arrow up perpendicularly, and when it came down again, it fell within the circle. These Indians, the Cabôclos, are of great assistance to naturalists and travellers, whom they guide through the virgin forests, procuring for them specimens of the rare birds and animals which they require for their collections, and maintaining a commissariat well stocked with meat and fresh fish.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ARCHER, ROBIN HOOD.

His Birth—His Companions—Arrows shot the Distance of a Mile—Episode from "Ivanhoe"—Locksley—The Willow Wand—The Ballad of Adam Bell—William of Cloudesley and his Skill—Shooting with the Bow, and standing on one Foot.

"A FAMOUS man was Robin Hood"—so renowned, indeed, that we may rank him at once in the same class with the best archers of antiquity, of whom he, for his part, doubtless never heard in his life. The names of the Parthians, Scythians, Persians, and Cretans, were not likely to reach the ears of the archers of the middle ages.

According to the opinion generally entertained Robin Hood lived during the reign of Richard Cœur de Lion. The following epitaph, engraved upon his tombstone found near Kirklees in the county of York, gives as the date of his death 24th of December, 1247; but neither the stone nor its inscription is regarded as genuine:—

Hear underneath dis laitl stean
laie robert earl of huntingtun
nea arcir ver as hi sae geud
an pipl kauld im Robin Heud
sick utlawz as hi an is men
wil England nivir si agen
*obiit* 24 *Kal: Dekembris* 1247

The Robin Hood of the ballads appears to have been the

most celebrated of those foresters, often called "outlaws," who lived in the great woods of England, and who, while taking part in the cause of national independence against the Norman kings, employed themselves chiefly in chasing the game, and levying black mail upon wayfarers. The ordinary residence of this celebrated poacher and robber was the forest of Shirewood in the county of Nottingham, then called in the Saxon language "Sire-vode." It extended at that time for many miles, reaching even to the middle of the county of York.

According to certain authorities, he was of noble birth, and was named Robert Fitz-Ooth; he had even, they say—as will be seen from the inscription quoted—the right of bearing the title of the Earl of Huntingdon; but, having led in his youth a careless life, and squandered the greater portion of his patrimony, he was obliged to take refuge in the woods, while the remains of his fortune were seized by a sheriff and an abbot, a circumstance which goes far to explain Robin's dislike to the clergy and to civic officiousness. It is not probable that he was of such high birth. He loved the people too well, and did too much good to poor men, giving to them of his possessions (which, to be sure, had been but a short time before the possessions of others), not to have belonged to the ranks of the humbler classes.

Robin Hood, who was the best-hearted man in the world, was at the same time the most daring of poachers, and what is more important for our purpose, the most skilful archer of his day. His band was composed of a hundred as desperate fellows and almost as good bowmen as himself. Several of them, immortalised in ballads, live still in the memory of the people—Mutch, the Miller's son, old Scathelock, Robin's right hand man Little John, so nick-

named because of his almost gigantic stature, and finally, the chaplain of the band, Friar Tuck, the soldier-monk, who fought in his gown with an oak cudgel. It is this lay brother, this very good liver—"who lives a good life, is sure to live well"—that Sir Walter Scott has made famous in his romance of "Ivanhoe," under the name of the "Hermit of Copmanhurst." Robin Hood's brave troop spent much of their time in "driving dull care away;" or, rather, in enjoying the freedom of their lawless lives. They were kind to their prisoners, shedding no blood except in their own defence and to escape capture; and loved better to shed wine, an operation which Friar Tuck understood particularly well.

The adventurous spirit of the captain of this band, his resistance of tyrannical laws, his humanity, the protection he afforded to the weak, his love of archery, and his wonderful skill as a bowman, were enough to make the name of Robin Hood popular. The localities which he frequented, the springs and wells at which he was accustomed to stop, and from which he drank, the places in which he is believed to have slept, are to the present day held in veneration, and visited by enthusiastic admirers. His hunting-horn is as highly esteemed as that of Roland in France. Formerly, games and fêtes were celebrated in his honour. Clubs of archers and cross-bowmen assumed him as their patron. Archers swore by his bow, which, down to the end of the last century, was preserved, together with one of his arrows, at Fountains Abbey.

It was with this weapon that he accomplished his remarkable feats, with regard to which, however, history is silent. All that it says of him is embraced in phrases like the following, from Thierry's "Histoire de la Conquête

de l'Angleterre par les Normands :"—"Among the outlaws was the famous robber, Robin Hood, whose memory the common people celebrate in games and plays, and whose story, sung by the minstrels, is to them of greater interest than any romance in the world."

To know more of the life and adventures of this great forester one must consult the ballads, but even these do not mention any of his great triumphs of skill. Sir Walter Scott, however, attributes to him one feat, which all who have read "Ivanhoe" will remember—and who has not? The great novelist has not invented the facts; he has only borrowed them from ballads referring to archers who are stated to have lived before Robin Hood, and in his justification it may be said that if the exploit was not Robin's, it was worthy of him. In any case it was performed by an Englishman.

Before quoting Scott, let us see what tradition says of our hero. It is stated that Robin Hood and his faithful Little John sometimes shot arrows to the distance of a mile. Charlton, in his "History of Whitby," says that, according to tradition, the two happened to dine one day with Richard, the Prior of the Abbey of Whitby, who, having heard of the fame of his guests as archers, asked them, when they had dined, to give him a specimen of their skill. To oblige the prior they mounted to the top of the monastery, and from that high position discharged their arrows, which fell near Whitby Bath, a good mile distant from the abbey. In commemoration of the feat, the prior had a pillar erected on the spot where the two arrows were found, and this may be seen to the present day. The honest old author adds with *naïveté*, "that the circumstance would perhaps shake the convictions of some of my readers."

Sir Walter Scott, as we all know, has introduced Robin Hood into "Ivanhoe," under the name of Locksley, a name which, in fact, Robin sometimes assumed, just as he often disguised himself in various ways to baffle pursuit.

At the close of the tourney at Ashby, when King John, annoyed with an archer whom he had observed in the crowd, who had been heard to make certain disloyal remarks, compelled him to take part in the shooting which terminated the display. A buckler was set up as a target, and among the competitors, a guard who came forward, seemed to be the most skilful of all. But Sir Walter's own words must be quoted:—

"'Now, Locksley,' said Prince John to the bold yeoman, with a bitter smile, 'wilt thou try conclusions with Hubert, or wilt thou yield up bow, baldric, and quiver to the provost of the sports?'

"'Sith it be no better,' said Locksley, 'I am content to try my fortune; on condition that when I have shot two shafts at yonder mark of Hubert's, he shall be bound to shoot one at that which I shall propose.'

"'That is but fair,' answered Prince John, 'and it shall not be refused thee. If thou dost beat this braggart, Hubert, I will fill the bugle with silver pennies for thee.'

"'A man can do but his best,' answered Hubert; 'but my grandsire drew a good long-bow at Hastings, and I trust not to dishonour his memory.'

"The former target was now removed, and a fresh one of the same size placed in its room. Hubert, who, as victor in the first trial of skill, had the right to shoot first, took his aim with great deliberation, long measuring the distance with his eye, while he held in his hand his bended bow, with the arrow placed on the string. At length he made a

step forward, and raising the bow at the full stretch of his left arm, till the centre or grasping place was nigh level with his face, he drew his bowstring to his ear. The arrow whistled through the air, and lighted within the inner ring of the target, but not exactly in the centre.

"'You have not allowed for the wind, Hubert,' said his antagonist, bending his bow, 'or that had been a better shot.'

"So saying, and without showing the least anxiety to pause upon his aim, Locksley stept to the appointed station, and shot his arrow as carelessly in appearance as if he had not even looked at the mark. He was speaking almost at the instant that the shaft left the bowstring, yet it alighted in the target two inches nearer to the white spot which marked the centre than that of Hubert.

"'By the light of Heaven!' said Prince John to Hubert, 'an thou suffer that runagate knave to overcome thee, thou art worthy of the gallows.'

"Hubert had but one set speech for all occasions. 'An your highness were to hang me,' he said, 'a man can but do his best. Nevertheless, my grandsire drew a good bow——

"'The foul fiend on thy grandsire and all his generation!' interrupted John; 'shoot, knave, and shoot thy best, or it shall be the worse for thee!'

"Thus exhorted, Hubert resumed his place, and not neglecting the caution which he had received from his adversary, he made the necessary allowance for a very light air of wind, which had just arisen, and shot so successfully that his arrow alighted in the very centre of the target.

"'A Hubert! a Hubert!' shouted the populace, more interested in a known person than in a stranger. 'In the clout!—in the clout!—a Hubert for ever.'

"'Thou canst not mend that shot, Locksley,' said the Prince, with an insulting smile.

"'I will notch his shaft for him, however,' replied Locksley.

"And letting fly his arrow with a little more precaution than before, it lighted right upon that of his competitor, which it split to shivers. The people who stood around were so astonished at his wonderful dexterity, that they could not even give vent to their surprise in their usual clamour. 'This must be the devil, and no man of flesh and blood,' whispered the yeomen to each other; 'such archery was never seen since a bow was first bent in Britain.'

"'And now, said Locksley, 'I will crave your Grace's permission to plant such a mark as is used in the North country; and welcome every brave yeoman who shall try a shot at it to win a smile from the bonny lass he loves best.'

"He then turned to leave the lists. 'Let your guards attend me,' he said, 'if you please—I go but to cut a rod from the next willow-bush.'

Prince John made a signal that some attendants should follow him in case of his escape; but the cry of 'Shame! shame!' which burst from the multitude, induced him to alter his ungenerous purpose.

"Locksley returned almost instantly with a willow wand about six feet in length, perfectly straight, and rather thicker than a man's thumb. He began to peel this with great composure, observing at the same time, that to ask

a good woodsman to shoot at a target so broad as had hitherto been used was to put shame upon his skill. 'For his own part,' he said, 'and in the land where he was bred, men would as soon take for their mark King Arthur's round-table, which held sixty knights around it. A child of seven years old,' he said, 'might hit yonder target with a headless shaft; but,' added he, walking deliberately to the other end of the lists, and sticking the willow wand upright in the ground, 'he that hits that rod at five-score yards, I call him an archer fit to bear both bow and quiver before a king, an it were the stout King Richard himself.'

"'My grandsire,' said Hubert, 'drew a good bow at the battle of Hastings, and never shot at such a mark in his life—and neither will I. If this yeoman can cleave that rod, I give him the bucklers—or rather, I yield to the devil that is in his jerkin, and not to any human skill; a man can but do his best, and I will not shoot where I am sure to miss. I might as well shoot at the edge of our parson's whittle, or at a wheat-straw, or at a sunbeam, as at a twinkling white streak which I can hardly see.'

"'Cowardly dog!' said Prince John. 'Sirrah Locksley, do thou shoot; but if thou hittest such a mark, I will say thou art the first man ever did so. Howe'er it be, thou shalt not crow over us with a mere show of superior skill.'

"'I will do my best, as Hubert says,' answered Locksley, 'no man can do more.'

"So saying, he again bent his bow, but on the present occasion looked with attention to his weapon, and changed the string, which he thought was no longer truly round, having been a little frayed by the two former shots. He then took his aim with some deliberation, and the multitude

awaited the event in breathless silence. The archer vindicated their opinion of his skill: his arrow split the willow rod against which it was aimed. A jubilee of acclamations followed; and even Prince John, in admiration of Locksley's skill, lost for an instant his dislike to his person. 'These twenty nobles,' he said, 'which, with the bugle, thou hast fairly won, are thine own; we will make them fifty, if thou wilt take livery and service with us as a yeoman of our body guard, and be near to our person. For never did so strong a hand bend a bow, or so true an eye direct a shaft.'"

This incident, Sir Walter, as we said, borrowed from a very old ballad, "Adam Bell, Clym o' the Clough, and William of Cloudesley," three outlaws who were predecessors of Robin Hood, were as inseparable as that famous archer, Little John, and Friar Tuck, and, according to the ballad, were born in Cumberland. They were convicted of poaching, outlawed, and obliged to take to flight to escape the fate to which their offences doomed them. United by misfortune, says Augustin Thierry, they swore fraternity, according to the custom of the age, and fled together to dwell in the forest of Inglewood — called Englyshe wood in the old romance — between Carlisle and Penrith. Adam and Clym were unmarried, but William had a wife and children, whom he longed again to see. One day he told his companions that he wished to visit his family at Carlisle. "Brother," said they, "don't go there, we advise you, for if the sheriff catches you you are a dead man." William set out in spite of this warning, and arrived at night in the town, where he was recognised, denounced, taken prisoner, and condemned to be hanged. He, however, like Robin Hood, was the friend of the com-

mon people, and a little shepherd boy, who had met with some kindness at his hands, at once ran to the wood, and told Adam and Clym, who were successful in rescuing him. Then,

"William sayde to his brethren two,
This day let us lyve and de;
If ever you have nede as I have now,
The same shall you find by me."

At length, however, the three friends began to feel a distaste for the adventurous and wild life they led in the woods, and entering into negotiations with the agents of the king, came to London, in order to obtain from him a written agreement of peace. By means of the intercession of the queen they obtained their pardon; but at the very time when the king was engaging his word to forget the past, a messenger arrived with the news of frightful excesses that had recently been committed by the three friends in the town of Carlisle. The king, who was at table when the news arrived, was thunderstruck, but told the three that they would have to compete with his own bowmen, and if they did not win, death should be their lot.

The archers bent their stout weapons, and discharged their arrows straight at the target.

"Then spake Wyllyam of Cloudeslè,
'By him that for me dyed,
I hold him never no good archar
That shoteth at buttes so wyde.'

'At what a butte now wold ye shote,
I pray thee tell to me?'
'At such a but, syr,' he sayd,
As men use in my countrè.'"

Then William went to the wood with his friends, and

planted in the earth a hazel wand. Begging all present to be quiet a moment, he took his stand, bent his bow, and shot. The arrow split the wand in two. William of Cloudesley, however, according to the ballad, gave a still greater proof of his skill—acting the part, indeed, of a voluntary Tell. He addressed the king:—

"I have a sonne is seven yere old;
He is to me full deare;
I wyll hym tye to a stake,
All shall se, that be here;

And lay an apple upon his head,
And go syxe score hym fro,
And I myself with a brode arȯw
Shall cleve the apple in two."

And he did it too.

"But Cloudeslè cleft the apple in two,
His sonne he did not nee.
'Ouer Gods forbode,' sayde the kynge,
'That thou shold shote at me.'"

Robin Hood is said to have sometimes missed in shooting, and, according to one ballad, on a certain occasion by three fingers and more, when his disappointment was such that he flung away his bow in disgust.

The character of these outlaws—especially of Robin Hood—has been greatly elevated and ennobled by the historian of the Norman conquest. Under his pen, Robin Hood is no longer the chief of a band of adventurers, but the patriotic leader who struggles against the invaders of his country. The band he commands is said to consist of those vanquished Saxons who would not submit to the authority of the Norman kings, and who preferred to wander at their own will unsheltered, unprotected by the

law, to living quietly among those who submitted to their conquerors.

Nothing proves more clearly the love of the English people for archery than the veneration with which the memory of Robin Hood was regarded in the first years after his death. He was honoured as a saint, and had a special day assigned him in the calendar, when labour was suspended, and the peasants were engrossed with feasting, dancing, and shooting with the bow. "In the 15th century," says Thierry, "this custom was still observed, and the descendants of Saxons and Normans alike took part in the amusements of the occasion, without dreaming that these were monuments of the hostility of their ancestors. On this day the workshops and the churches were deserted—no saint, no preacher attracted the people from their devotion to Robin Hood—and this state of things continued after the Reformation had given an impetus to religious zeal—a fact which is attested by an English bishop of the 16th century (Latimer), who, in making his pastoral visitation, came one evening to a small town near London, and intimated that he would preach on the following day. He went accordingly to church, but, to his astonishment, found the doors closed. He inquired of a person why this should be, and was answered, 'Sir, this is a busy day with us; we cannot listen to you. *This is Robin Hood's day.* All the people of the parish are away to cut branches in honour of Robin Hood, and it is of no use to wait for them.' The bishop had to put off his ecclesiastical costume, quit the place, and continue his journey, leaving the town to the archers clad in green, who played in the woods the *rôles* of Robin Hood and Little John, and all the band."

According to Holinshed, in the twelfth year of the reign

of Henry VIII., the king, who was very young, and could not rest inactive, rose up early on May morn to go to gather green branches. He was richly clothed, his knights, squires, and gentlemen in white satin, his guards and yeomen in white taffeta. Each man carried a bow and arrows. They shot in the woods, and then returned, each one bearing a green branch in his cap. The people, who had heard that the prince was out, came forth to see him shoot, for at this time his grace shot as far and as well as any of his guards. While the sport was going on, an archer presented himself before the king, and begged his majesty to stop for a moment and see a feat in archery, and the king, who was in good humour, complied. The archer then caught up his foot into his tunic as high as his breast, and, standing on the other foot, shot an arrow straight into the target—a feat which the king and all the court greatly admired. The archer received a good recompense for this proof of skill, and afterwards, both among the people and at court, the only name he got was Foot-in-Bosom.

## CHAPTER V.

### OTHER ENGLISH ARCHERS.

**The Bow in England—By whom was it Introduced?—Richard Cœur de Lion—A Pincushion—The Siege of the Castle of Chalus—Death of King Richard—Who killed him?—The Kings of England—Queen Victoria—The Archers of Wales—The Centaur—Fire Arrows—The Ancients and Moderns compared—The Turkish Ambassador at London—The Museum of the Society of Toxophilites**

ENGLAND has produced many archers of most incontestable skill, and the bow has been in use from a very early age. It is stated that the natives owed their first knowledge of it to Julius Cæsar and the Roman army, but it is possible that the bow was introduced only by the Scandinavian invaders, who used it with a certain degree of success, as we know from the sagas of the skalds, or poets of the north. Ancient drawings frequently represent Saxon archers, and the weapon in these pictures shows a peculiarity—the string being fastened not to the extremities of the wood, but a little nearer the middle. It was only at the battle of Hastings that the Saxons learned, to their cost, the fatal effects of the bow—not the short massive instrument which they themselves wielded, but the long and slender one which the Normans used to such purpose. At the first discharge of the arrows shot by the Norman troops a strange and terrible panic seized the Saxons, and they imagined that the enemy were already in their midst.

The conquered race, however, soon became as good archers as their conquerors. After the battle of Hastings a general disarmament took place; but William of Normandy, who was a subtle politician, permitted the vanquished of all ranks to carry and use this simple weapon. From that time the bow passed into the hands of the people, who became attached to it as to a friend, and always carried it about with them. They wished to rival and excel the Normans in its use, and some time after the Conquest it was to be seen in every castle and cottage, holding the place of honour above the fire. Country gentlemen and yeomen, when they walked over their domains, carried it as we carry the fowling-piece at the present day; and, from the prince to the humblest of his subjects, it became the favourite, the national, arm.

William himself was a most skilful archer, and few men were able to bend the bow which he used. Richard the First, under whose reign lived Robin Hood, of whom we have spoken in the preceding chapter, achieved great exploits with his archers in the Holy Land. At Jaffa, on one occasion, he rushed with a small band of ten knights upon a body of 15,000 Moslem horsemen, and in an instant he found himself in a cloud of arrows, not one of which, singularly enough, inflicted a wound. He regained his camp safe and sound, "reappearing," says a historian, "like a pincushion bristling with needles." The English monarch, however, at last fell a victim to his own imprudence. An arrow, more skilfully directed and more deadly than those shot by the Saracens, killed the Lion-hearted. The shaft, it is true, was not discharged from a bow, but an arbalet or cross-bow.

Richard had laid siege to the Castle of Chalus in Limousin,

where a treasure had been discovered, of which he claimed possession as suzerain. Adhemar V., Count of Limoges, his vassal, consented to share it with him, but decidedly refused to give it all up. Richard, who rejected the offer of compromise, was making the circuit of the ramparts on the 26th of March, 1199, when he was hit on the left shoulder by an arrow, which it is believed was poisoned. He tried himself to tear it from the wound; but the shaft only came away, and the head, which remained behind, added every moment to the inflammation. When this took place, the king had with him, as usual, his constant companion, Mercadier, leader of the mercenaries, whose practice it was to sell themselves to the first adventurer who employed them. He and Richard were inseparable friends; they travelled together constantly, they fought side by side, and the letters written from France by the king to his lords in England, always contained a word in praise of Mercadier. It was this knight who carried away the wounded monarch, had his wound dressed by the surgeon, and, in his absence, directed the assault on the castle. The place was taken and the garrison all hanged, with the exception of the cross-bowman by whom the king had been mortally wounded, and who was reserved for a more terrible fate. Richard, however, knowing that his end was approaching, entertained more generous sentiments than he had the credit of being possessed of, and before he died, expressed a wish to see the man to whom he owed this sudden end.

"What wrong have I done you?" asked he of the man.

"What wrong!" cried the archer; "thou hast killed my father and my brother, and at the present time you are preparing for my execution. But do what you will with

me, I shall suffer gladly if you yourself perish. I shall have avenged the world for all the misery thou hast inflicted on it."

"I pardon thee," said the king; but the young man refused his mercy.

"Thou shalt live in spite of thyself," said Richard, "to be a witness to my clemency."

The monarch then gave orders that his chains should be removed, that he should have a hundred English pence, and that he should be set at liberty. The story shows that Richard knew how to appreciate the qualities of a brother soldier, even though they had cost him his life. But his generous intentions were baffled, for Mercadier, disobeying his commands, detained the archer, flayed him alive, and afterwards hanged him on a gibbet. Historians are not agreed as to the name of the victim, and ascribe the death of the king to different persons. Bertrand de Gourdon, Pierre Bazile, and Jean Sandraz are mentioned among others; and it is now generally believed that Pierre Bazile shot the fatal bolt. It could hardly have been De Gourdon—or at least, if so, he was not flayed alive by order of Mercadier, seeing that we hear of him some years later, swearing fidelity to Philip Augustus for the domain of Gourdon. The historians, in attributing to him the death of Richard, may have been led into error by assigning the vengeance of Mercadier to personal antipathy; for Bertrand de Gourdon belonged to a noble family which the chief of the mercenaries had despoiled of their property.

Some other English sovereigns were very fond of archery, and among them Henry VII., whose two sons, Prince Arthur and his brother, who was afterwards Henry

VIII., inherited their father's taste, and became excellent bowmen. The former often took part in this exercise in company with the archers of London at Mile End, and it was in remembrance of his remarkable skill that every good archer adopted the name of Arthur. The captain of the body of archers was further honoured with the title of "Prince Arthur," which was some years after, during the reign of Henry VIII., replaced by that of "Duke of Shoreditch." The following were the circumstances under which this change took place. The king having one day arranged a shooting party at Windsor, a citizen of London, named Barlow, who lived at Shoreditch, introduced himself among the guests and eclipsed all by his dexterity. The prince was so charmed that he bestowed upon him in joke the title of Duke of Shoreditch, which the company of English archers afterwards appropriated to themselves.

Among the other monarchs who cultivated the art with success, Edward VI. and Charles I. should be mentioned. The ladies of England, who take part in every exercise that befits their sex, and who have illustrious exemplars in Diana the huntress and the Amazons, also made themselves famous as archers. The Princess Margaret, daughter of Henry VII., and Queen Elizabeth, handled the bow with great dexterity. The latter, when at the house of Lord Montecute, at Castle Cowdrey, in Sussex, went out on the morning of the 19th of August, 1591, to ride in the park. Suddenly a nymph came forth from a wood, and presented a cross-bow to the royal lady, who, being able to use this as easily as the long bow, immediately began to shoot with it, directing the arrows against a herd of deer, three or four of which fell under her shafts.

Queen Catherine of Portugal, wife of Charles II., did

not practise archery—the long bow had gone pretty much out of fashion in the 17th century—but she bestowed all her patronage upon the Society of London Archers, who, in testimony of their gratitude, presented her with a silver cup, bearing the inscription, "The Archers to Queen Catherine."

An English Lady practising with the Bow and Arrow.
(Early part of Nineteenth Century.)

Her Majesty Queen Victoria faithfully observed the traditions of her ancestors with respect to archery, and in her youth, and at the commencement of her reign, regularly practised with the long bow.

If the kings and queens of England used this weapon with such wonderful ardour, we must look to more than mere personal taste to explain the reason, which was, no

doubt, their desire to encourage this taste among the people. The dynasty could not be indifferent to the value of this arm, the taste for which, among the English, was so well known that their skill in it was proverbial.

The inhabitants of Wales surpassed all others in their

English Archer of the Middle Ages. (From a MS. in the British Museum.)

ability in the use of the bow. Giraldus Cambrensis, a writer of the 12th century, says that their arrows pierced oaken doors four fingers in thickness. He mentions also the case of a knight pinned to his saddle by two Welsh arrows, which went through his thighs. And this is not the only instance, as we shall show further on, of a man becoming a centaur in spite of himself, and being stuck by an arrow to his saddle bow.

Every one has heard of the exploits of the archers who served in the English army. The French often felt and acknowledged their prowess—especially at Cressy, where the cross-bowmen employed by the French could not stand before the English archers. Indeed, a great misfortune befell them at the very commencement of the action; the cords of their cross-bows, distended by the damp, were

French Archer of the Middle Ages.

rendered useless, while the long bows of the English did not appear to have suffered much from the same source, owing, perhaps, to their precautions, and their great care of their arms.

We must not forget to mention the fire arrows discharged by the British archers, which spread conflagration as well as death wherever they went.

If we drew a comparison between the archers of the middle ages and those of modern times, we should be

struck with the vast superiority of the former, and be tempted to suspect that the historians have much exaggerated their prowess. The ancient archers, according to contemporary reports, shot to distances which, in these times, seem fabulous, and with precision which nowadays we cannot understand. An Act was passed in the reign

Fire Arrows. (From J. Smith's "Art of Gunnery." London, 1643.)

of Henry VIII. commanding young men of twenty-one years of age who practised shooting at a target to do so at no distance less than 220 yards. Among archers of the present time such practice is quite unknown, for when we shoot at a target it is never at a greater distance than 80 or 100 yards.

Strutt observed, out of curiosity, shooting with the bow in the environs of London at the commencement of this

century, and he confesses that he has often waited for hours without having seen the "gold," which forms the centre of the target, touched a single time. The thing happens, however, sometimes (he adds), but so rarely that it is to be attributed to chance rather than to the skill of the archer. He mentions, however, a fact which seems to prove that skill in shooting has not quite died out. In 1795, or 1796, the Toxopholite Society held a great meeting near Bedford-square, at which the Turkish ambassador in London was present, to take part in the games. It seemed to him that the butts were too short for shooting at long range, and he therefore shot over the enclosure, into the open country. Strutt says that he saw him discharge his arrows at a distance which was double the length of the butts, and that one of his shafts went quite 480 yards.

The ancestors of Robin Hood, William of Cloudesley, and his companions, did not shoot with an equally long range; but it must not be forgotten that they shot with precision against a fixed target, while the diplomatist in question shot at large. The bow of the Turkish ambassador has been preserved in the museum of the Toxophilite Society, where the curious may see it.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE BOW IN THE EAST AND IN AMERICA.

The Archers of the Grand Turk—Precautions against Turning the Back to the Sovereign—The Crossing of Rivers—Cannon-ball pierced by an Arrow—The Indians of Florida—Their Skill and Strength—Experience of the Spaniards—A Centaur.

OTHER nations besides those we have mentioned excelled in the use of the bow, especially the peoples of the East. The Grand Turk had among his Janissaries a corps of archers, consisting of 400 or 500 men, very dexterous in the use of the bow. They were called *solachis*, or left-handed men, because nearly one half of them shot the bow in that fashion. This portion of the troop marched always on the right of the Sultan, while their comrades, the right-handed men, were placed on the left side, so that neither in shooting their arrows required to commit the incivility of turning their backs to his Highness, which would have been the height of rudeness.

While crossing a river they no more thought of quitting the flanks of their lord's steed than they did when marching on the firm ground. As a reward for this kind of service they received a crown-piece when the water came up to their knees, two crowns when it reached to the waist, and three when they were covered to the neck. But it was only for the passage of the first river that they received this payment, the others brought them nothing; so that in water as on land it was *le premier pas qui coûte*.

Other soldiers of the Turkish army who made use of the bow could pierce cuirasses of the finest temper, and plates of copper four fingers thick, through and through. "I have seen," says Blaise de Vigenère, "when the Turkish army came to Toulon under the command of Caïraddin Bassa, a certain Barbarossa, admiral of the Grand Solyman, piercing a cannon-ball with an arrow which he shot from his bow."

The Orientals retained the use of the bow in the army a much longer time than the Western people. They employed it till the end of the sixteenth century, and at the battle of Lepanto, in 1571, the Turks knocked over with their arrows more Christians than the Christians with their fire-arms did Turks.

Among the peoples who formed in those ages numerous and powerful tribes, the North-American Indians achieved wonders by means of the bow. At a later period they adopted the weapons introduced into their territory by the Europeans, and turned them with deadly effect against the latter; for the musket handled by marksmen such as one reads of in the novels of Fenimore Cooper was as effective as the bow had been in the hands of their ancestors.

The Indians practised the use of the bow from their earliest youth, for scarcely could the infants walk before they began to imitate their fathers, and demanded bows and arrows. When refused them they manufactured them of a sort of cane, and with them amused themselves by hunting mice in the paternal wigwams. When there were no mice, they made game of flies, and having exhausted them they had the lizards to fall back upon, and for these they lay in wait sometimes for five or six hours with the patience and tenacity which characterise the savage.

Such were the pursuits of the young Indians of Florida

at the time, when, at the commencement of the sixteenth century, the Spaniards penetrated into the country with the object of conquering it. As they advanced in age the Floridians continued to perfect themselves still further, shooting with a surprising strength. In one encounter, a very strong horse having been killed during the night by an arrow, the Spaniards had the curiosity to investigate in the morning the manner in which it had been struck. They found that the arrow had entered by the breast, had pierced the heart, and was stopped by the bowels. On another occasion one of the officers of the Spanish army was struck by an arrow on the right side, and it would have "done for" him had it not turned aside, for it cut through his buff jacket and coat of mail.

The sight of this perfectly-tempered suit of mail, which had cost 150 ducats, completely pierced by an arrow, gave the Spanish major much to reflect upon. He began from that day to be less confident of the use of his jackets of iron and steel. In order to know still better upon what to depend, the officers released one of their prisoners, placed in his hand a bow and arrow, and ordered him to shoot at the strongest coat of mail they had, which they set up at the distance of 150 paces, and which was covered thickly with reeds. The Indian, in order to shoot with more force, stretched and shook his arms, and pulled his fingers. The arrow was delivered with such power that it pierced the reeds and the armour, and would certainly have killed any one that might have been inside the mail. They doubled the covering of reeds, and the archer again shot and pierced the three substances; but as the arrow did not go deep, he claimed another trial, saying that he was willing to lose his life if he did not shoot with as much effect as on the first

occasion. The Spaniards, however, now knew all they wished to know, and did not allow him another chance to show his skill. So disgusted were they with the result, that afterwards they spoke of their armour in terms of reproach, as "Holland sheeting." They had to protect themselves as well as they could, but this was not all, they must protect their horses, which were of great service, and could not be replaced in Florida, where the horse was then unknown. They therefore manufactured coats of a coarse kind of cloth, four fingers thick, with which they covered the breast and croup of their animals, and which protected them from the terrible flights of shafts discharged by the natives.

This ingenious precaution had not yet been adopted, when one day, as the Spaniards were crossing a river, an Indian, concealed behind the brushwood, shot one of the officers. The arrow pierced the coat of mail, passed through the right thigh, broke the croup of the saddle, and penetrated into the side of the horse, which, maddened by its wound, leapt out of the water, and, bounding across the plain, endeavoured to shake itself free of the weapon and of its rider. Some soldiers ran to his assistance, and soon perceived that the man was, so to speak, riveted to the horse by the arrow, so terrible had been its force. The new centaur was conducted to head-quarters, and his companions, lifting him gently, cut the arrow between the thigh and the saddle. The missile was only a piece of reed pointed with a bit of cane, so at least says Garcilaso di Vega; and the Spaniards asked with astonishment how so light a shaft could have pierced so many obstacles.

A long time after this period of the Spanish invasion the skill of the Indians of Florida was still famous, and not without reason. They met, sometimes ten in number, each

furnished with a bow and quiver full of arrows, and forming a circle, in the midst of which one threw up an ear of maize, made it the common target. The evidence of their ability was their having peeled the ear of all the grains with their arrows before it again reached the ground. One sometimes saw the ear suspended in the air for a considerable time, maintained, as it were, aloft by the arrows which pierced it, and of which the last fell with the last grain.

## CHAPTER VII.

### WILLIAM TELL AND THE LEGEND OF THE APPLE.

The Cross-bow—Story of William Tell—Silence of the Historians of the Time—The Bailiff Gessler a Myth—Voltaire's *mot*—The Story of the Apple called in question by a Swiss—Pamphlet burned by the Hangman—Hart, the Tradition of Danish origin—Palnatoke accomplishes Tell's Feat in the Sixteenth Century—Narrative of the Scandinavian Historian—Critical Examination of the Legend—A Curious Dictum—Did Tell ever exist?—Cloudesley also Shoots at the Head of his Child—Two Cross-Bow Shots.

THE cross-bow as well as the long-bow has had its day of glory and of triumph. The reader will at once recall the name of William Tell. Although his adventure is now classical and known to all, it is necessary to revert to it for a moment, as well as to the history of him who is the hero of it.

Tell was a poor peasant who was born at Bürglen in Uri, and lived at Altorf, at the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth centuries. Like others of his fellow citizens, he declined to bow to the despotic authority of a certain Austrian bailiff named Gessler. The latter had caused a pole to be stuck up in the market place in the middle of the public square of Altorf, and had his hat placed upon it. To this ridiculous symbol of power he demanded that all should bow. Tell having refused his homage, was condemned by Gessler to the cruel alternative of having to shoot at and strike an apple placed upon his child's head, or of suffering death

in the event of his skill in archery being unequal to the feat. Tell was so fortunate as to be successful, but he was nevertheless detained by Gessler, who was determined to carry him a prisoner to his castle of Küssnach, on the Lake of the Four Cantons. During the voyage thither such a tempest arose, that the bailiff in terror undid the bonds of his captive, who now took the helm and steered the bark to the shore. But as soon as he had reached it, Tell threw himself from the boat, and, pushing it out again into the lake, took to flight. He lay in ambush in a road through which Gessler had to pass on his way to Küssnach, and there killed the bailiff with a bolt from his famed cross-bow. Such is the history of the famous Swiss hero. It is said that he took part in the revolution begun in 1307 by Werner Stauffacher, (Schwytz), Walter Fürst (Uri), and Arnold Melchthal (Unterwalden), for the delivery of the Swiss cantons from the Austrian yoke. It is believed also that he fought at Morgarten, the battle which in 1315 consolidated the independence of the country, and that he perished in 1354 in an inundation at Bürglen.

The Swiss recognise and honour Tell as their principal hero, and to glorify his actions and perpetuate his memory fêtes have been instituted, medals struck, and monuments consecrated. Who that has travelled in Switzerland has not marked the veneration of the people for the memory of William Tell? Who has not seen the famous chapel bearing his name, and the bank on which he sprang from Gessler's bark, and which is to this day named "Tell's Leap?" Here is the fountain where the father stood and shot his arrow; the tower there stands where once grew the linden tree under which the brave child was placed by order of Gessler. But are these monuments authentic?—

and here another question arises—is the story of the hero true in all its parts? Do not certain details appear to belong to the world of fiction?

There are some authorities who have doubted Tell's story; there are even some who have denied his existence, as well as that of the bailiff Gessler. What is certain is that contemporary Swiss chronicles—those of Justinger of Berne and Jean of Wintherthür—never speak of these feats, and do not even mention the name of William Tell. Was it from ignorance or forgetfulness that they thus omit to mention him? Historians so conscientious could not have fallen into the double fault. Is it not the case then that certain feats ascribed to Tell had not in his own day that notoriety which they have since acquired in the imagination of the people?

The same silence with regard to Tell is preserved by foreign contemporaneous chroniclers. It is only at a much later period that his name for the first time appears, and the story of his life, which gradually develops into a series of interesting and pathetic details, is recorded. Why should Justinger and Jean of Wintherthür, the two contemporaries of Tell, be silent about what so intimately concerned them? and why should the historians who wrote a century after the event—Melchior Russ, Petermann Etterlin, Stumpf, Egidius Tschudi—be so prodigal of details of which the earlier historians were entirely ignorant.

Let it be noted also that these chroniclers, like those who come after them and have copied them, do not agree as to the name of the bailiff, giving it sometimes as Grissler, sometimes as Gryssler, most frequently, it is true, as Gessler. What appears almost demonstrated at the present day, is that there never existed in the country an Austrian bailiff

of that name. Contemporaneous and authentic documents prove that in 1302 a certain Eppe was styled bailiff of Küssnach, and that in 1314 the office remained in the same family. After their extinction the title passed to Walter de Tottikon, and by his daughter Jeanne to her husband Heinrich de Hunwil. Down to 1402 it was never held by a Gessler, or by any one bearing a name at all like that. The historians also do not agree as to the date of the event, some giving none, others, more daring, setting it down as 1296, 1313, 1314, or 1307, the last being that which is now generally adopted.

Voltaire, who did not much believe in traditions, says in his "Annales de l'Empire":—"It must be confessed that the history of the apple is *bien suspect*, and that all the details which accompany it are not less so." This is exactly what a Swiss, writing under the name of Freudenberger, had the hardihood to desire to demonstrate in the last century in a pamphlet entitled "William Tell, a Danish Fable," which appeared in 1760. This work, the production of a man who, as has been said, "was either very rash or very enlightened," raised such a tempest of popular indignation that at last it was suppressed in all the cantons, and in that of Uri especially it was burned by the hands of the hangman. We need not enter into an examination of this pamphlet, but one point interests us—the story of an apple placed on the head of a child being pierced by an arrow.

"I defy every unprejudiced person, however eager he be for such a thing," says Freudenberger, "who is ordinarily carried away by his feelings, and allows himself to forget his prejudices. What does he wish to prove? That the history of William Tell, and especially the apple, is a fable borrowed from the

Danish. But why deny in regard to a Swiss archer an achievement which you admit in the case of a Danish one named Toke or Toko, who lived in the tenth century, and of whom Saxo Grammaticus speaks in his chronicle? Like Tell, Toke was condemned—though by a King Harold, not a bailiff—in 965, to hit an apple placed on the head of one of his children. Like Tell, too, he had concealed one or two arrows to use against him who compelled him to the awful act; and, like Tell once more, he killed the tyrant as soon as an opportunity presented itself.

Toke appears to be the same personage as the famous Scandinavian chief Palnatoke, whose exploits are recorded in the sagas of the North, and who was always at war with the neighbouring petty kings. Palnatoke had founded a celebrated association in the isle of Wollin, the head-quarters of which was the fortress of Jomsborg. All who served under him considered themselves brothers, and bound themselves to avenge as a body the injuries inflicted on any one of them, and to divide their booty in common among them. The laws of the fraternity were extremely rigorous; no woman, for example, being allowed to enter the fortress. Palnatoke died, it is said, in the isle of Fionie, the inhabitants of which still preserve his memory, and assert that his spirit sometimes appears among them.

Saxo Grammaticus does not speak of Palnatoke the pirate, but only of Toke or Toko the archer. There is, however, as already mentioned, ground for believing that these are one and the same personage. To Toke is attributed the adventure of the apple which has rendered the name of Tell so famous. It is necessary, in order that the reader may judge with knowledge, to place before him the narrative of the Scandinavian historian.

"A certain Toke, in the service of King Harold, had made many enemies among his companions in arms because of his zeal and his great abilities. One day, in the middle of a feast, and after copious libations, he boasted that his skill in shooting with the bow was so great that he could strike an apple, however small, placed on a stick at a certain distance. The words, carried by envious tongues, came to the ears of the king, who wickedly resolved to test the confidence which the father had in his powers. He ordered Toke to make his son take the place of the stick to which he had referred, and put an apple on his head. Should he fail to strike the apple, he was to forfeit his life for his imprudent boasting. He was thus placed in the position of having to do more than he had promised; for his idle words were only the result of his drunkenness, of which his enemies had taken advantage to ruin him. Their treachery, however, was brought to nought, for the skill which he was about to display confirmed his boasting, however rash. Their spite could not destroy the confidence he had in his ability; and the more difficult was the proof to which it was put, the more honourable was his success.

"Toke encouraged his son by a few quiet words. 'Take care,' said he, 'to keep erect. Do not bow the head; be not afraid of the sound of the arrow, for the slightest movement is enough to disturb the calculations of the best marksman.' Finally, in order to remove the slightest cause of fear, he ordered him to turn his head that he might not see the approach of the arrow. Having afterwards taken three shafts from his quiver, he placed one in his bow, took his aim, and pierced the apple.

"If it had been his misfortune to shoot his son, he would have paid with his own life for the involuntary crime—

his want of skill would have inflicted a double blow. I do not know which is worthy of most admiration—the courage of the father or the coolness of the boy. The one, by his ability as an archer saved himself from taking the life of his own son; the other, by his presence of mind, saved his own life and that of a beloved father. The young man gave confidence to the old one; for the former awaited the result of the arrow with calmness equal to the address of the latter in shooting it.

"Harold subsequently asked him for what reason he had taken several arrows from his quiver, having but only one chance to shoot. 'In order,' replied Toke, 'to avenge with the others the error of the first, if the shot had failed, and to punish the guilty for the fall of the innocent.' Some time afterwards the king, while far in the forest, fell under an avenging shaft from Toke's bow, and soon expired of the wound."

As one sees, the similarity of the two stories is very striking; but is it the result of chance, or can it be accounted for? It might of course, strictly, well enough be that the same feat was performed in two different countries, at an interval of several centuries. I do not examine here the question as to whether a father ever could lend himself to such a caprice, or whether such a caprice ever entered the head of even a tyrant. But it may be that the story of Tell's adventure is only a fable founded on that of Palnatoke, and the silence of contemporary historians authorises the belief. That the Scandinavian legend should be known in Switzerland is not at all surprising, if the country has received —as it is asserted—colonists from Sweden.

The matter is in a state of chaos, out of which it is difficult enough to evolve fact; but certain critics have been

able to make the confusion worse confounded by accusing Saxo Grammaticus of plagiarism. "Of plagiarism," we might well reply, "how can that be, seeing that he died before William Tell was born? he was not heard of for several centuries afterwards." The reproach, however, is not cast on Saxo Grammaticus, but on the editors of his posthumous work, who have had no scruple in incorporating with the history published in his name a host of anecdotes of foreign origin. In this case the story of William Tell would have found a place in the collection of Saxo Grammaticus during the course of the fourteenth or even of the fifteenth century, and, in fact, the Danish work was printed for the first time in 1514.

We have not, however, to enter into this critical discussion, but there is a point to which we must draw attention, and which is of great importance as bearing on the subject. There existed formerly among the populations of the North a wide-spread saying expressive of the skill of an archer or cross-bowman—"He is so sure a marksman, *that he could strike an apple on the head of his child.*" The question would be much simplified, and the problem solved, if we could trace the source of this proverb. But what is its origin? What primitive adventure gave birth to this popular saying, which perhaps was in existence before Palnatoke himself? As to William Tell, it seems to us difficult, almost impossible, to deny his existence. That it was doubted at a date soon after the time when he is said to have lived—namely, in 1388, that is to say, only thirty years after his death—is shown by the fact that it was necessary to prove his existence by a public document. On that occasion 114 persons came to attest that they had known William Tell. This number is considerable, and incredulity must have been

very strong even then when so many had to be put into the witness-box. Two or three persons might deceive themselves, but 114 could not all be "taken in" at the same time.

Ludwig Hausser, to whom we are much indebted, comes, in his "Legend of William Tell" (Heidelberg, 1840), to the conclusion that Tell actually lived, but he does not accord to him that historic importance which is ordinarily ascribed to him. If it is true that he exercised such an influence upon his country, how was it that he played no part in the events which accompanied and followed the revolution of 1307? Why did he not take part in the oath of Grütli? Was he among the thirty citizens who joined the three chiefs on that occasion? Was he with Walter Fürst, whose daughter, it is said, he married? Was he present at the battle of Morgarten? There is no proof. But if he was witness of those great events, he was lost in the multitude —an obscure soldier fighting for a great cause. He was not among those whose names were in the mouths of all; nothing brought him prominently before the public. How then has he acquired such celebrity as he enjoys? The reason is that the Swiss have symbolised, under a single name, the glorious resistance to tyranny made by the whole people. As soon as the country had been delivered from its oppressors, as soon as it had achieved its independence, and given the baptism of glory to the name of Switzerland, which it adopted, the want of a history and of beginnings was felt, and the past was carefully searched for everything that was connected with the revolution of 1307. William Tell, it is evident, had done something bold, something which his countrymen had not yet dared to do. What that deed was his contemporaries do not state; they do not

even give the name of the now famous mountaineer. It is probable that he declined to recognise the authority of the Austrian bailiffs, and that he showed them open resistance; perhaps, indeed, he even refused to bow to a hat placed on a stick. And what a despotism must it have been, when the admiration of these unfortunate peasants was so much excited by an act so perfectly natural!

According to the same critic, some parts of Tell's history hardly admit of serious consideration. He refused rightly to obey the order of Gessler, and passed the hat with fierce and unbending look. But this same Gessler ordered him to shoot an apple from the head of his son, and he submitted! Was it not imperatively his duty to disobey in this also? It really, however, matters little whether the life of Tell belongs to history or to legend. The decision of the question cannot rob the early Swiss of their patriotism, or diminish the heroism of those who — whoever they may be, obscure or known — took part in the great revolution, and delivered their country from an odious yoke. That is a glory which no one thinks of doubting, and of which no one would wish to despoil them.

But to return to the story of the apple. We have seen that this feat of skill was not performed for the first time by Tell. Palnatoke had dared to do it as early as the tenth century, and there was, moreover, among the people, a common saying directly referring to it. But this is not all. Palnatoke had an imitator before William Tell, and that was William of Cloudesley, of whom we have spoken above. The ballad which bears his name, and of which we have quoted certain stanzas, does not finish with the hero splitting a hazel wand with an arrow at 400 paces. It goes on to

describe the English archer advancing to the king, and saying :—

"'I have a son is seven yere old,
He is to me full deare;
I wyll hym tye to a stake,
All shall se that be here;

'And lay an apple upon hys head,
And go syxe score hym fro,
And I mye selfe with a brode arów
Shall cleve the apple in two.'

'Now haste the then,' sayd the kyng,
'By hym that dyed on a tre,
But if thou do not as thou hest sayde,
Hanged shalt thou be.

'And thou touche his head or gowne
In syght that men may se,
By all the sayntes that be in heaven,
I shall hang you all thre.'

'That I have promised,' said William,
'That I wyll never forsake,'
And there even before the kynge
In the earth he drove a stake,

And bound thereto his eldest sonne,
And bad hym stand styll thereat,
And turned the childe's face him fro,
Because he should not start.

An apple upon his head he set,
And then his bow he bent;
Syxe score paces they were meaten,
And thether Cloudeslè went.

Then he drew out a fayre brode arrowe,
Hys bowe was great and longe;
He set that arrowe in his bowe,
That was both styffe and stronge.

* * * *

And Cloudeslè cleft the apple in two,
His sonne he did not nee;
'Over Gods forbode,' sayde the kinge,
That thou shold shote at me.'"

Switzerland was not the only country that could, during the middle ages, boast of good cross-bowmen. France had her own also, and the army numbered in its ranks this kind of fighters, as formerly it had been supplemented by archers. Francis I. was the last king who made use of both. At the battle of Marignan (1515) a body of 200 mounted cross-bowmen accomplished wonders. This was, however, the last occasion on which they were employed to any extent, and henceforward, though there were men skilful in the use of the arm, they were few.

At the battle of Bicoque, between the French and the Imperialists (1522), a Spanish captain, having opened his helmet to breathe, Jean de Cordonne, the only cross-bowman then in the French army, discharged his arrow at him with such force that the stroke killed him at once. Some years later, at the siege of Turin, the only cross-bowman in the troops — was it Cordonne again? — put *hors de combat* in five or six skirmishes more of the enemy's men than the most clever arquebusiers disposed of during the whole siege.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE BOW IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

**The Bow again in Favour—The Five Hundred Companies of France—Fête in 1854—Revival of Archery in England—Fishing with Arrows—The Yurucares of Bolivia—The Fish in the Air—The Kitsch Negroes.**

THERE are certain institutions that persist in living, and the tenacity of existence of some inventions, in spite of the changes of time and manners, is remarkable. Others, more useful, more suitable to the spirit of the age and to the altered circumstances, have taken their place, the world has adopted them, and fashion has enforced their use. But it does not matter; old things, like old men, are unwilling to lapse into oblivion.

Among the inventions of modern times none has been the subject of so many improvements as the musket, and the onward march once commenced has not stopped—the gun is still being perfected every day. In spite, however, of the superiority of the new over the old weapons—in spite of the success of the needle-gun, the Chassepôt, and the Martini-Henry—there still exist men who persist in using bows and arrows.

Reference is not here made to those savage tribes, flat of nose and weak in intelligence, who, not having the means of procuring other weapons, are compelled to content themselves with those which they received from their fathers, and which they in their turn will transmit to their children. Look

at what happens among ourselves in the middle of the nineteenth century. It is true the bow is not used as a military arm, but in the opinion of some that is all that is wanting! It would be a fine sight, indeed, to see our volunteers armed with the bow and quiver! But patience, that time may come perhaps!

In France, in order to advocate the revival of archery, a number of well-meaning enthusiasts published a paper called "L'Archer Français," a journal for bowmen, which was published in 1857, in which certain men, sincere and worthy enough, sought to take us back far beyond the heroic ages of Greece—even to fabulous times. The results obtained were of a nature to encourage their efforts, for already Paris contains a certain number of societies, of which one bears the name of "The Imperial Company of Archers" (*Compagnie Impériale des Tireurs d'Arc*), while there are over five hundred clubs scattered throughout the country. Formerly, the best archers of the French armies came from Picardy and Artois, and it is still in these provinces that this sport is held in the highest esteem. The Seine appears to be the boundary of the land of the bow.

The importance of this movement in favour of the revival of archery is proved by the congress which took place at the town of Noyon in 1854, when a hundred and one companies of archers assembled to compete for the prizes offered. Each band marched with its banner and its special uniform. The Swiss archers came in the costume of William Tell; the good men of Amiens were there, as well as cross-bowmen, attired in the costume of the time of Louis XI., with plumes partly deep and partly light green. It would be difficult to tell the exact number of arrows discharged on this occasion—some say 22,000. The number

cannot be guaranteed, but that is not surprising, seeing that the shooting lasted for six weeks.

In England a revival of the same kind also took place, and the movement was more pronounced, since liberty of association is more complete than in France, and the bow was for a long time the national arm. There is a very considerable number of clubs of archers, organised upon an excellent footing, in the practice of holding meetings and regularly practising.

Blaine observes that the formation of the Toxopholite Society was the first ostensible revival of the art. It has been said that Sir Ashton Lever was principally instrumental in organising this association. It is, however, well known that it was first established in 1781 at Leicester House (then standing in Leicester Fields), at the time Sir Ashton Lever showed his museum there, and the Society then, and for many years afterwards, held their meetings in Bloomsbury Fields, behind the spot where Gower Street now stands. About twenty-five years afterwards they removed their meetings or "target days" to Highbury Barn, and from thence to Bayswater. Some years ago, the Woodmen of Arden, the Toxophilites, and the Society of Archers, were incorporated into one body. Most counties have now their archery meetings, which are generally held between the close of the hunting and the beginning of the shooting seasons. The Royal Company of Archers of Scotland are said to owe their origin to the commissioners who were originally appointed by James I. to superintend and regulate the exercise of archery throughout the kingdom. At present they form a numerous and respectable body. The uniform of the company is tartan, lined with white and trimmed with green and white fringes; a white sash with

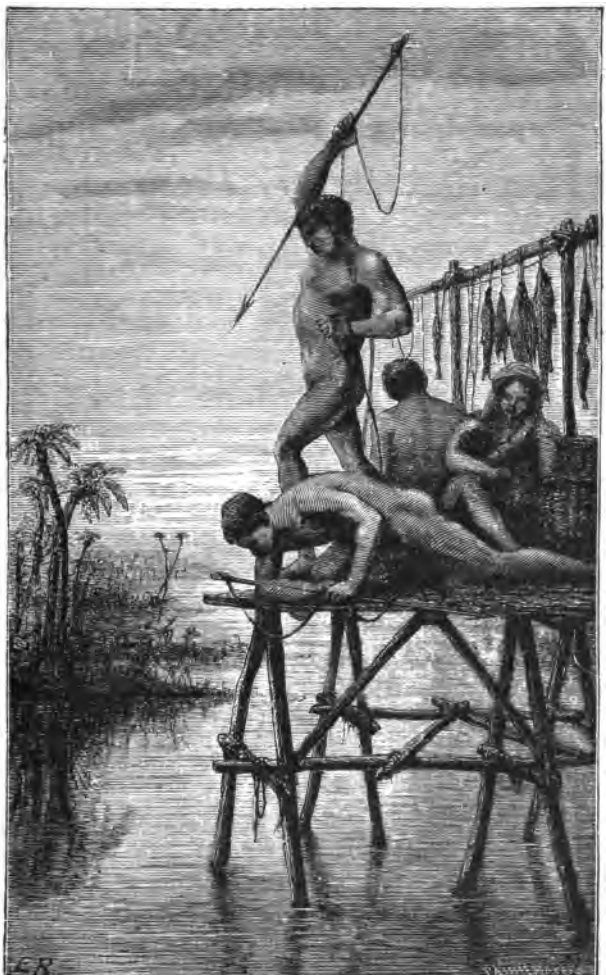
green tassels, and a blue bonnet with St. Andrew's feather and cross. They have also two standards, on one of which is inscribed, *Nemo me impune lacessit*, on the other, *Dulce pro patriâ mori.*

As to the modern practice of English archery, some idea of it may be formed from the following account of that of the body just referred to, who, according to the writer quoted by Blaine, realise most forcibly whatever legendary and classical impressions we possess concerning ancient bowmen, as well by their grotesque accoutrements and ancient dress as by the dexterity they exhibit in their achievements. "It is," he observes, "comparatively a very easy matter to hit a stationary mark with a shot from a musket, but let any man take in his hand a rifle, and shoot with a single ball at marks of the dimensions I am about to specify, and he will find it very difficult to outdo the feats of Scottish archers. The point-blank practice of the body-guard is one hundred feet at a circle four inches in diameter. Shooting three arrows, I have seen an archer place the whole in the mark in succession, and have been told that eight arrows out of ten have been shot into this space at the distance. An archer fresh and in good practice is generally within two inches of the mark with all his arrows. In the field or at roving shooting the distances are one hundred and eighty and two hundred yards, and the mark thirty inches square. The shooting at these distances being at an elevation, it is surprising how near to the mark the arrows fall. It is not deemed good practice if they are not placed within a bow length or six feet of the centre of the mark. A bow-length is cut out by half a bow; half a bow by a foot, when the arrow hits the foot of the target; a foot by a thumb when it lights between the legs of the target; a thumb by a clout,

when the arrow sticks in or passes through the target; and clouts are preferable according to their nearness to the centre or mark. A shaft in the clout at two hundred yards is here a very common occurrence, and certainly must be considered a beautiful display of skill. There is another field practice corresponding to that generally used with us in England, but here employed only by beginners; it is one hundred yards with a circular mark four feet in diameter. Here no arrow counts that is not in the target, but at the roving distances all within three bows are reckoned, and knowing all the niceties and difficulties that must be attended to, you would be as much surprised and pleased as I have been to see the accuracy of Scottish archers."

Beside the gentlemen of the United Kingdom shooting with bow and arrow the poor savages of Africa and America cut a sad figure with their clumsy weapons. The English gentlemen archers pursue their sport under the best conditions. Nevertheless, the English amateur would stand but a poor chance in competing with his wild dark-skinned *confrère*, for what matters the quality of such an instrument if the workman be but skilful? And those inhabitants of the savannah and the forest have endless opportunities of cultivating their talents. They do not content themselves with fighting and the chase; they even fish with the arrow.

The Yurucares of Bolivia, South America, launch upon the water a raft made of poles lashed together. On this frail support they go forth to fish, armed with their bows and with arrows twelve feet long. When they strike the fish, the length of their arrows enables them to draw it to them easily. An American traveller, Mr. Gibbon, often observed them at this employment—one standing in the



FISHING WITH THE JAVELIN.

middle of the raft, and the other two, one at each end, so that the passing fish could not escape the three. When one missed, which happened very seldom, he was hooked by his companions.

In the north of the same hemisphere the Indians practise this mode of fishing, but mingle amusement with their labour by exercising their skill as much as possible. They send their arrows through the air almost vertically, and calculate so accurately their flight and the speed of the fish in the water, that the dart, when it suddenly comes down, strikes into and kills the prey. This kind of fishing has, however, its disadvantages, and even the most skilful hunter is often balked by the wounded fish sinking into the depths, carrying the arrow with it.

Some of the African tribes pursue another system. The Kitsch negroes, whom the German traveller, William de Harnier, became acquainted with when exploring the upper course of the Nile, catch their fish, not by shooting them with arrows, but by spearing them with javelins, to the butt-end of which a long cord is attached; the end of this cord the fisher holds in his left hand. Their boats are canoes, long and narrow, formed out of the trunks of trees. Sometimes the whole inhabitants of a Kitsch *sheriba* (village) combine, and fish together in common. They choose a favourable place, generally a reach in the arm of the Nile, at the extremities of which they construct palisades. The flotilla is then put in motion; each skiff carries two men, of whom one rows in the stern while the other in the bow brandishes his slender lance, which he darts at every fish that comes in sight, and which he pulls back by means of the cord which is attached to it,

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MUSKET AND PISTOL..

**Hunting by Torchlight in the Forests of America—The Marksmen of Kentucky—Snuffing and Blowing Out a Candle—Driving in Nails—Killing Squirrels by Ricochet—Feats of Skill with the Pistol—A Prince of the Caucasus—Pieces of Silver Pierced in the Air by Bullets—M. d'Houdinot—His Rencontre upon the Sea-shore—Shooting *à cloche-pied.***

WHEN missile arms had been replaced by percussion arms, a change which produced a revolution in the art of war, and consequently in the relative situations of countries; when the hand-cannon had succeeded the cross-bow, which itself had succeeded the bow, which again had succeeded the sling, and this last had succceeded the primitive art of throwing stones with the hand; when the gun had been invented, and it had given birth to the carabine and pistol, these arms were made to accomplish marvels—feats of skill such as would have rendered jealous the marksmen of any time, poor men who had only shapeless and imperfect instruments at their disposal.

Let not the reader expect a faithful and chronological list of the surprising achievements executed by the aid of these "fire-tubes." The province of hunting alone is an inexhaustible mine of the exploits of men who, still better than the Arabs, know how to make powder speak. Besides, in collections of sporting anecdotes the work has been so thoroughly and so frequently done that it would be inex-

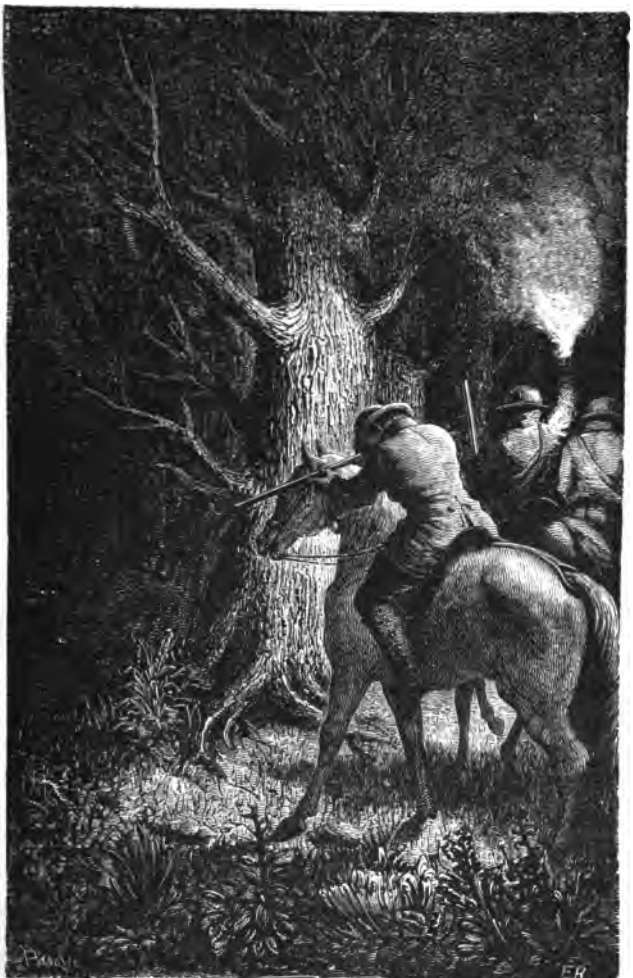
pedient to trouble the reader with tales with which probably he is already familiar. One exception demands our attention, that strange kind of hunting which is practised in our days in the forests of Kentucky, North America.

The Kentuckians are intrepid sportsmen, and one can hardly meet a man there who has not his carbine on his shoulder from the time when he is able to carry it to the end of his career. Often, after having followed the deer all day long, the Kentuckian returns to his house, and after his dinner and a little repose, sets out again at the fall of night to hunt by torch-light, or, as it is called, by forest-light. He first gathers a large quantity of fir-cones, his son or his servant who accompanies him carries an old frying-pan, and, thus equipped, they set out on horseback. They penetrate into the interior of the wood, and when they arrive at a favourable spot they light the resinous cones with a flint and steel, and the flame blazes up and flickers in the pan. The forest then assumes the strangest and most fantastic colours. The nearest objects are lit up by the glow of flames, while the depths of the wood remain shrouded in the most profound darkness. The hunter advances, and soon sees glittering before him two luminous points, the eyes of a deer or a wolf, which reflect the light thrown upon them with great brilliancy. The animal, astonished at this strange light, springs up at once in the darkness, and pauses petrified. The stranger, unaccustomed to the habits of the backwoods and the adventurous life of the New World, cannot help feeling a certain shock at beholding these two eyes shining in the darkness, but the Kentuckian is not sentimental, and is, besides, accustomed to the spectacle. Without making the slightest noise he sends his bullet into the animal, whatever it may be, that stands before him. Sometimes it turns

out to be a wolf, at another a poor cow, or it may be a strayed horse, that falls under the undiscriminating lead of the hunter. The latter continues his wild course, like the hunter of the German ballads, and when the sport has been good, he returns with perhaps a dozen deer.

The inhabitants of Kentucky practise another kind of nocturnal sport, in which, however, they have no danger to run, and no fatigue to fear. Sometimes, in the evening, in approaching a village or an encampment, you hear firing, which is caused by the young men amusing themselves by "snuffing the candle." On the outskirts of a wood burns a light, which produces such a singular effect that one would believe it to be a sacrifice offered by pagans to the goddess of the night. A dozen tall strong young fellows, armed with carbines, are ranged at a distance of fifty paces from it; near the target a man, standing watching, has charge of the candle, it being his business to re-light it when it is snuffed out, to replace it when it is broken in two, and in general to attend to the results. There are among the Kentuckians many marksmen who can snuff the candle without extinguishing it; there are some, of course, less expert, who strike neither the wick nor the flame. The former are encouraged by loud hurrahs, the latter saluted with equally loud shouts of laughter. Audubon says that he has seen one particularly skilful marksman, who, in six shots, three times snuffed the candle, and as to the others, either extinguished it or cut it immediately below the flame.

But these are not the only games of skill practised by the young men of Kentucky, another being that which they call "driving the nail." It is in open day, not at night or in the evening, that this sport is carried on. The mark, which is erected at a distance of fifty paces, consists of a target



HUNTING BY TORCHLIGHT IN KENTUCKY.

fixed in the earth, in the centre of which a nail of the required size is driven. The marksmen advance each in their turn, place a bullet in the palm of their hand, and cover it with a sprinkling of powder sufficient to carry it a hundred paces. To strike near the nail proves only very ordinary skill, to strike it and bend it is considered better, but only he who strikes it fair upon the head and drives it home passes for a really good shot. It is not uncommon to see a fine marksman perform this feat upon three nails in succession; and to have two nails for every half-dozen individuals is quite common. The competition continues to the exclusion of those who have not struck the nail on the head, and after every round those who have been successful begin again; at the close the number is gradually reduced to two, who contend for the honour of the championship of the society.

But the most extraordinary feat is that which Audubon saw done by one of these hardy pioneers, Daniel Boon, one of the first who explored the vast plains of Kentucky. He states that ne and his companion went on and passed along the rocks which border the River Kentucky, when after a time they came upon a flat platform covered with willow and oak trees. As the acorns had already fallen, they saw the squirrels gambolling upon every branch before them. His companion, a tall robust man of athletic form, clad only in the rough blouse of the hunter, and with his feet cased in mocassins, carried a long and heavy carabine, which he said, as he charged it, had never yet failed him, and which certainly did not fail him in this instance, when he took a pride in showing him what he could do. The barrel was cleaned, the powder weighed, the ball duly wrapped in a piece of cloth, and the charge rammed home with a white

willow wand. The squirrels were so numerous that there was no need for running after them. Without moving, Boon aimed at one of these animals, which having seen them had hid itself behind a branch at the distance of about fifty paces, and he asked Audubon to watch well the spot the ball would strike. He, having slowly raised his arm, fired, and the report resounded through the wood and the mountains. Just under the squirrel the ball had struck the bark, which, flying up, killed the animal, and sent it whirling in the air as if it had been blown up by the explosion of a mine. Audubon adds that he subsequently saw several marksmen perform the feat, which is called *raising the bark under the squirrels.*

Such is, indeed, the love of shooting among the Kentuckians, and the skill they have acquired, that when they have no other mark they take a piece of bark, cut it into the form of a target, and having, with a little water or saliva, placed in the centre a pinch of dust, moistened, and made to look like the eye of a buffalo, they riddle it till powder and ball are exhausted.

Among the higher order of sportsmen in England, and after them among the commonalty, pigeon-shooting has long been a very popular sport, and during the summer season the crack of the gun is heard at many a ground in London and the provinces. Clubs of gentlemen are formed, who compete for prizes at regular intervals, either in ordinary matches or in handicaps, and the prizes subscribed for are frequently of great value. At the Red House and Hurlingham Park, in London, shooting proceeds every Saturday during the season, and the contests are witnessed with great interest by large companies of the wealthiest and most fashionable members of society. The Prince of Wales is a

frequent competitor, and the lists of members include the most aristocratic of our sportsmen. At certain periods international matches are held, in which, besides the best shots on this side of the water, fine marksmen from France and the Continent always take part. These competitions are generally attended with a large amount of betting on every shot, and considerable sums of money are continually changing hands on the results. The sport, however, is not confined to the wealthier class, for in England, all over the country, there are numerous grounds, attached, for the most part, to public-houses, where pigeon-shooting is carried on, encouraged by the landlords, whose interest it is to get up competitions for the custom they draw to their houses. There is a great difference of opinion between the public generally and those interested in the results as to the utility and humanity of this sport; but there is no doubt, in the first place, of its popularity, and in the second of the excellent shooting sometimes shown by its followers. The birds employed are blue rocks, quick and steady flyers, of which thousands upon thousands are destroyed during every season. For each competitor a pigeon is placed in a shallow box, provided with a movable lid worked by a string, which is put a certain number of yards from the shooters—that is to say, from "scratch;" for, in the case of handicaps, every member is stationed in the position to which, by his past performances, he is, in the judgment of the handicapper, entitled. At a given signal the string is drawn, and the lid of the box consequently raised, by a person appointed for the purpose, and the shooter, lifting his gun to his shoulder, when his prey is on the wing, discharges it. The bird must fall within a certain boundary, the extent of which is settled beforehand; otherwise it is considered lost, and

the shot counts as a miss. The result, of course, is in favour of that competitor who has killed the largest number of pigeons in the smallest number of shots.

The files of the sporting papers would, if carefully searched, furnish many evidences of the skill of English sportsmen; but it is unnecessary to do more than refer to a case of exceptional excellence. The brothers Richard and Edward Toomer reduced shooting with gun and pistol so much to a science that numbers of gentlemen became their pupils, and received instruction from them. Richard, at a cricket match near Hardford Bridge, Hants, his gun being loaded with *shot*, twelve times struck a cricket ball thrown by Harris, one of the sharpest bowlers in England. On another occasion, at Moyles Court, near Kingwood, he made a trifling bet with Mr. Mist that he would kill more birds with his rifle and single ball than the other did with his fowling-piece and shot. In twenty shots Toomer killed every time, and Mr. Mist nineteen, and on the latter expressing his surprise, and observing that as the trees were very lofty, his opponent's eyesight must be of superior quality, Toomer replied, "I will convince you, my friend, there is not such wonderful eyesight required, and that what you have seen is not so difficult as you imagine." Selecting a rook, and levelling his rifle, he desired Mr. Mist to tie a handkerchief round his eyes, so that he was in perfect darkness. This being done, he fired and brought down his bird, and, reloading, repeated the feat with the same result, to the astonishment of many spectators.*

As to the use of the pistol, the mountains of the Caucasus, and particularly of Daghestan, which was the theatre of the great feats of Schamyl, nourish many excellent marks-

* Blaine's "Rural Sports."

men. A Russian poem, by Bestoujiff—"Ammalat Bey," the scene of which is laid in the Caucasus—speaks of the hero who, while galloping at a terrific rate, suddenly seized his pistol and struck the iron shoe off his horse at the moment when it raised its hind leg. The servant who accompanied the prince re-charged the arm, and running on in front, threw a piece of silver into the air; the horse at the moment fell, but the shot was fired nevertheless, and the coin was struck.

This test of a piece of silver thrown into the air and struck by a pistol-shot is the touchstone of marksmen. It has often been reproduced under different forms. An Englishman is mentioned, who, thirty-two times out of forty struck a piece of ten centimes thrown up into the air. We read in M. Houdinot's book, the story of an amateur who, being present when a feat of this kind was performed with a five-franc silver piece, did not speak a word during the performance. Then, all at once, he said, "My means do not permit me so much luxury; but here is a piece of twenty sous." He threw it in the air, fired, and it fell down only a ring of silver, so skilfully had it been pierced.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE JAVELIN.

The Lance in Persia, in Turkey, and in Arabia—Ancient Exercises of the Turks—Throwing the Javelin as practised among the Greeks—Achilles and Hector—The *pilum* of the Romans—Commodus and the Moors—The Ancient Shield.

THE throwing of the javelin, which is accomplished by the hand alone, without the employment of any propelling instrument, is an accomplishment for which many nations, both in antiquity and in modern times, have been distinguished. The Orientals have been renowned for many centuries for throwing the *djerid*, a dart like a long reed, very slender, and made of hard wood. While riding slowly along they hold this weapon, which is ornamented with festoons and tassels, in a perpendicular position at their sides, but when they break into the gallop they brandish it above their heads, and after, like the slingers, obtaining a purchase by swinging it round, they throw it forward with all their force. At the same moment they urge on their steeds to their utmost speed in pursuit of the flying spear, and such is their expertness and the swiftness of their horses that they reach it as it darts through the air, and catch it before it falls to the ground. In performing this marvel of expertness, they certainly require to stoop, often almost to the ground, but they never leave the saddle. The djerid might be used as an offensive arm, but it is very seldom employed in warfare, and figures chiefly in jousts and sham fights. The

"game of the djerid," in short, is the favourite pastime of the Persians, the Arabs, and the Turks, and is all the more enjoyed by them because it is also an equestrian exercise, and affords them an opportunity of displaying at once their skill in throwing the lance and in horsemanship. When it is carried on those who take part in it are divided into two parties; sometimes they are separated by a barrier, but generally the field is left open to permit of the unrestrained movements of the horses. The numbers on each side generally range from about twelve to fifteen, and they charge each other with apparently all the earnestness of a serious encounter. The men seem fired with the passion of actual warfare, and the lances that fly thick in the air, the turbans that rise and fall, and mingle together as in a dance, the swift flying horses, the cries of the cavaliers as they pass and repass, some of them bending beneath their horses to catch the falling lance, others rising in their stirrups to discharge it anew, form a scene singularly striking and strange. They can seize the javelins without alighting from their horses; while at full speed they can throw themselves under their horses and rise in a moment with the weapons in their hands, and some are so skilful that they can catch without an effort the weapon of their opponents. Chardin, the celebrated traveller of the seventeenth century, beheld these sports in several parts of Persia. "Among the noblemen," says he, speaking of one of these jousts at which he was present, "there were fifteen young Abyssinians who were conspicuous for their skill in throwing the dart and javelin, for their splendid horsemanship, and for the swiftness of their movements. They never required to dismount or pull up their horses in order to pick up their weapons, but while careering at full speed threw themselves over the

sides of the animals and picked up the falling darts with a dexterity and a grace that delighted all who witnessed the scene.

Niebuhr, who visited Arabia about the end of last century, speaks in the highest terms of the skill of the Emir of Loheïa, who, at full gallop, was able to overtake the djerid, and to catch it up before it had reached the sand. The traveller adds, however, that the Arabs are not so fond of this game as the Turks, or even the Persians.

In former times the Turks always carried three of these lances placed in a sheath on the right side of their horses, and from their earliest youth trained themselves by continual and varied practice in throwing the djerid. While still children, an iron javelin, very much heavier than the ordinary weapon, was placed in their hands, and a spot of soft earth was assigned them as a target; thus they were introduced to arduous practice at once. In throwing the iron spear they rested the left hand upon the belt, and stood with their feet in line, the one behind the other. After their arms had become accustomed to this weight they were armed with a javelin of wood, much lighter than the iron one, but still much heavier than the ordinary djerid. This lance they were obliged, according to one authority (Gueri, "Mœurs et Usages des Turks," Paris, 1746), to throw and stick in the ground two thousand times in succession. This training was supposed generally to be sufficient to qualify them for the weapon they were really to use, and after they had gone through these two probationary stages successfully, the djerid was put into their hands, and it no doubt appeared to them as light as a feather in comparison with the lances they had been in the habit of using. Every Friday, on issuing from the mosque, the grandees of the

court assembled in a great square in the seraglio to throw the djerid, and on these occasions sometimes a thousand horsemen took part in the game. The Sultan himself used to mingle amongst them, and if he had the misfortune to wound any one he compensated the sufferer by a donation in money, which was given by his treasurer, who always

Exercise with the Javelin. (From a painted vase in the Louvre.)

accompanied him on these occasions. Sometimes the purse contained five hundred crowns, but the amount depended a good deal upon whether His Serene Highness was in a good or a bad temper.

The practice of throwing the lance dates from very ancient times. The Greek language abounds to such an extent in names for the various kinds of lances or spears that we are unable to distinguish precisely between the different varieties. The javelin was the same sort of weapon as the lance, if it was not that identical weapon. The

throwing of this projectile—which was an arm as well as an instrument of amusement—formed part of the military education, and the young men were trained in its use for a greater length of time and much more thoroughly than in any other exercise. Their arms, already strengthened by practice in throwing the ball and the quoit, derived from

Etruscan Preparing to Hurl his Javelin. (From a tomb at Chiusi.)

the practice a muscular power which showed itself on the day of combat both in attack and defence. The casting of the javelin had a beneficial influence upon the upper parts of the body by developing the thorax and the respiratory organs. For this reason it took its place in medical gymnastics, like quoit throwing, which was recommended by physicians as of great benefit to men of plethoric temperament, and to those subject to giddiness. The attitude of the body, the movement of the arms and shoulders, and the

position of the head were not the same in throwing the javelin as in throwing the quoit. The athlete who held by the former exercise kept his body straight, with his right shoulder bent a little behind to allow of the arm being raised aloft, the eye fixed on the object aimed at, the left arm hanging free or bent at the most obtuse angle, the legs placed as in quoit throwing, the left foot generally in front, the right planted in the rear, and rising lightly when the weapon was hurled. The hand, raised to the height of the

Thessalian Horseman and Foot Soldier Armed with Javelins. (From an ancient coin.)

Throwing the Javelin. (From an ancient coin.)

right ear, held the javelin horizontally, and gave it a double revolving motion before it was thrown. To assist these movements, which rendered the hand flexible, and doubled the force of impulsion, the handle of the javelin, especially in the case of that employed in war, was furnished with a leather strap, which the Romans called *amentum*. Some hold that this apparatus not only increased the force with which the weapon was thrown, but gave a greater degree of precision.

As a weapon of offence the javelin was used in three ways. It was discharged by means of catapults or other machines of war; it was employed as a pike or lance—with it, according to Homer, Achilles killed Hector under the

walls of Troy, the Trojan hero being stabbed in the neck—and it was thrown with the hand as a dart. The warriors who made use of it in this way went to the field armed with two javelins, on the prudent principle of having two strings to one's bow. Homer's heroes never began battle without observing this precaution. When they had selected their adversary, they discharged at him either a single spear, or both, one after the other, and it was only then that they came together and engaged hand to hand in the struggle with the sword.

Examination of ancient monuments enable us to understand better the difference between the Greek javelin and the Roman *pilum* or spear. The latter was very strong and thick, and, like the former, it was used both as a projectile and as a stabbing weapon. It was made of dogberry-tree wood, was between seven and eight feet long, and was furnished with an iron head half the length of the entire weapon, the socket into which the shaft was inserted reaching half way along it. We have spoken of the exploits that have been achieved in throwing the javelin, when referring to the skill of the Emperor Commodus. The people of Mauritania were famous for their skill in this art, and they were the instructors of the Romans under the Empire. The tutors of Commodus belonged to this nation, but the pupil surpassed his teachers. The Cadusians or Geles, a people of Media, were counted, after the Moors, the most adroit throwers of the dart.

The ancient warrior, however skilled in the use of the javelin, had only mastered one half of his profession; for the management of the shield was quite as important as the command of the weapon of offence, and the fate of the combatant depended in great part upon his manner of

holding the shield. When the dart came from the hand of an Achilles, an Ajax, or a Hector, it was very difficult to ward it off, though the warrior could evade the danger that threatened him by leaping on one side when it came straight upon him, by bending down and holding his shield high above him when it descended on him from a height, and generally protecting himself by the help of this movable rampart, held at a distance from the body, so that if the dart pierced the buckler it should not penetrate to the body armour. It was in this last attitude that the combatants marched against the enemy.

## CHAPTER XL

### THE BOOMERANG.

**Description of the Instrument—The Natives alone know how to use it —Inexpertness of the Europeans—Different Modes of throwing it —Its singular properties.**

THE people of Africa and Oceania still use the javelin as well as the bow; but of all the projectiles employed by savages the most curious is the boomerang, a sort of club bent at almost a right angle, smooth on one side, slightly hollowed on the other. It is necessary that it should be made of a single piece of wood, in order not to get out of the form upon which its wonderful properties depend. At first sight, and without examining it closely, one would say it was a sword of wood rudely and unskilfully shaped. The first Australian explorers were deceived, but their error was pardonable, for the boomerang, though a weapon of war, is also equally used in hunting.

The specially interesting and original feature of the boomerang is that when thrown by the natives it describes the most extraordinary curves, and performs the most unaccountable evolutions. "When thrown by the natives," we say, for, whether from ignorance of the principle of the boomerang, or from want of skill, Europeans have never been able to use it. Thrown by strangers it flies and falls like any ordinary piece of wood.

In hurling this curious weapon the native takes it in the right hand by a species of handle into which one of the two

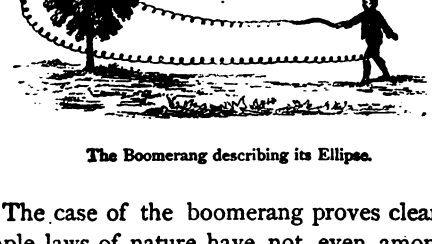
branches is fashioned, and throws it either into the air at some distance above the ground, as one might throw, for example, a reaping-hook, or upon the ground, like a pair of compasses with the legs extended, which a school-boy might throw to the distance of some paces from him out of spite. In the latter case the projectile strikes the ground at a little distance from where the thrower stands, but, owing to its

Australian Throwing the Boomerang. (After Commodore Wilkes.)

bent form, and the elasticity which it gives, it rebounds immediately, and continues to rebound in successive ricochets, with a force which is most destructive to any body, organic or inorganic, that happens to lie in its course. Thrown thus among a flock of wild ducks, the boomerang commits the greatest havoc, striking many of the fowls, and killing wherever it strikes. The other mode of using the boomerang, much more curious, but at the same time more practicable than that described, consists in hurling the weapon at an object standing sometimes at a great distance.

The thrower waits calmly till the boomerang, having accomplished its work of destruction, returns, describing an ellipse, and falls at the spot (or at the most a few paces from it) from which it was discharged.

Very few boomerangs have been brought to Europe, and, indeed, very many people are in ignorance of the existence of the weapon. When it becomes better known, when men of science will have examined it with intelligent care, perhaps some means of applying it usefully will be



The Boomerang describing its Ellipse.

found. The case of the boomerang proves clearly that the most simple laws of nature have not, even among civilised nations, been sufficiently utilised. And it is not flattering to our *amour-propre* that this lesson in mechanics comes to us from Australia, from a country the inhabitants of which are among the least civilised and the least capable of civilisation. One is perfectly non-plussed in attempting to explain how savage tribes, utterly ignorant of physics and the laws of dynamics, could have conceived the idea of an instrument at once so ingenious and so simple. It was no doubt chance that first made them acquainted with the properties of a piece of wood thus shaped; and one can imagine how, in the chase, an Australian, having in his

hand a curved stick, and throwing it against the wild fowl, was astonished to see it come back to his side; how, being a keen observer, the strange fact made a deep impression upon him; and how, after endless trials, he came to a satisfactory result, and fashioned another instrument like the one chance had put into his hands.

However this may be, the natives use this instrument with extraordinary skill, and travellers recount incredible feats performed by them. Thus, a native throws his boomerang with his right hand, and catches it again with his left, and *vice versâ*. They hit unerringly objects concealed by other bodies — strike down, for example, birds or other small animals hidden behind trees or houses. Nearer objects they also hit by a back-stroke. The perfection of skill is to strike the enemy with a double boomerang—that is, with one discharged with the right and another sent by the left hand. The unhappy man who serves as target thus finds himself between two fires, or rather between two clubs, which, after describing eccentric courses, both infallibly strike him, unless he is sufficiently skilful to escape by a *ruse*, or is possessed of a shield of a particular shape, behind which he may shelter himself.

It is possible to calculate mathematically the curve which the boomerang describes. Commodore Wilkes, who commanded the celebrated scientific expedition of the United States round the World, made experiments with this instrument, and has traced the curves described by it when discharged at the angles of 22°, 45°, and 65°. The most singular movement is that which is performed when the weapon is thrown at the angle of 45°. Its flight is then effected from behind—the thrower turning his back to the object which he wishes to strike.

But by virtue of what principle is the phenomenon accomplished? Travellers who have visited Australia, either do not try to investigate the cause, or give an insufficient explanation, or plainly say that the thing is incomprehensible. Willingly would they leave it alone as a prodigy; but in these scientific days prodigies are no longer the fashion. In the first place, how comes it that the boomerang does not follow the straight line like other bodies thrown in the same manner? Its particular form is the cause, and as the straight line in which the force of projection tends to drive it does not pass through the centre of gravity—which lies outside the mass, a little nearer the longer than the shorter leg of this unequal pair of compasses—the instrument rotates continuously around the centre of gravity. The force of this movement is so great, that it diminishes but little before the weapon falls. The boomerang, by means of its level surface, easily cuts the air which sustains it, and, so to speak, carries it. For example, if the weapon is thrown with a slightly upward tendency, it mounts considerably upwards, a phenomenon which, perhaps, has led to several travellers believing that the natives always throw it higher, whereas they project it only a slight distance above, and indeed sometimes close to the earth. In any case, it is by the influence of the air that the upward movement is caused; but, on the other hand, centrifugal force exercises its influence, and tends to sweep the mass round in an orbit. This makes the boomerang describe an ellipse, which attains its maximum of curve when the movement is arrested by the resistance of the air.

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